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Hopkins

THE
WORKS
OF THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
EZEKIEL HOPKINS, D.D.

SUCCESSIVELY LORD BISHOP OF RAPHOE AND DERRY;

NOW FIRST COLLECTED.

ARRANGED AND REVISED,
WITH A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR, AND A COPIOUS INDEX,

BY JOSIAH PRATT, B.D. F.A.S.

LECTURER OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. MARY WOOLNETH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,
AND LADY CAMDEN'S WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURER AT THE CHURCH OF
ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY, LONDON.

—◆—
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM,
Goswell Street;

FOR L. B. SEELEY, No. 169, FLEET STREET;
J. WALKER; J. HATCHARD; WILLIAMS AND SMITH; W. BAYNES; SHERWOOD,
NEELY, AND JONES; CRADOCK AND JOY; T. HAMILTON;
MAXWELL AND WILSON; AND GALE AND CURTIS.

—◆—
1809.

WORKS

EXERCISES

NOW FIRST COLLECTED

WITH A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR AND A COPIOUS INDEX

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. IV

LONDON

Printed by J. B. Nichols and Son, Stationers, Strand, London.

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DEATH DISARMED OF ITS STING :

FROM SEVERAL

CONSIDERATIONS. .

DEATH DISBURSED OF ITS STING

CONFIDENTIAL

OF
PATIENCE
UNDER
AFFLICTIONS.

WALLACE

1870

OF
PATIENCE UNDER AFFLICTIONS.

JAMES i. 4.

BUT LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK, THAT YE MAY BE
PERFECT AND ENTIRE, WANTING NOTHING.

IF we consider the state and condition of those Jews, to whom the Apostle directs this Epistle, we shall find, that, as they were a dispersed, so they were an afflicted and persecuted people. There was always a most implacable hatred, in other nations, against the Jews; accounting them the most base, perverse, and infamous people under heaven. And, doubtless, though the whole body of them, which lived in Judea, were well enough secured from their affronts and injuries; yet, such parcels of them as were scattered into other countries sadly felt the effects of this natural aversion and antipathy. Yea, so low and despicable was their condition, that their own brethren, in scorn and contempt, call them *the dispersed among the Gentles*: John vii. 35. Their ancient religion, which they had received from Moses, was so odious to the Heathen, among whom they lived, that they accounted it the most ridiculous and sordid superstition that ever was invented: and, because they firmly adhered to a way of worship, which was so contradictory to that gross idolatry which had generally obtained in the world, they both derided them as credulous, and hated them as stubborn and inflexible. There is no hatred so bitter and irreconcilable, as that, which ariseth from different religions: for, religion being avowedly the highest concern of mankind, those who differ in this cannot but mutually accuse one another of folly and madness: and this begets mutual contempt, and ends in malice and violence; whilst each seeks to take the part of his God, and to vindicate his own wisdom in choosing him, against those, who must needs be concluded to despise, because they do not worship him.

And, therefore, as these scattered Jews were hated and persecuted upon the account of their own native religion, so much more, when divers of them were converted to the faith of Christ; because they then took up and professed a religion, more contrary to the Gentile impiety, than Judaism itself was. Yea, they were not only hated by the Gentiles, but by their own countrymen, the unbelieving Jews; who took all occasions to stir up the people against them, and to expose them, as the maintainers of a pestilent sect, to the fury of the enraged multitude: and we read frequently, in the Acts, what tumults, and uproars, and persecutions, were raised against them by this means.

To these dispersed and distressed Christians, the Apostle directs this his Epistle, and exhorts them, ver. 2. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations:* that is, when ye fall into divers tribulations; for, by *temptations* here, he means not the inward assaults of the Devil, but the outward assaults of his instruments. A strange command, one would think, to bid them rejoice at such a time, and in such circumstances as these! What! to rejoice when they were buffeted, reviled, spoiled, and murdered! appointed as sheep to the slaughter! enjoying their lives only at the courtesy of their enemy's malice! expecting hourly to be haled out, to suffer torments and death! Is this a proper occasion for joy? is it not rather, for sorrow and dejection? No, saith the Apostle: although your trials be great and manifold, yet account it joy; yea, *count it all joy when ye fall into these divers temptations:* v. 2.

But, certainly, so strange an exhortation as this, which seems so quite contrary to the inclinations of nature, had need be backed by some strong motive to enforce it. And that the Apostle gives them in the third verse: *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience:* and, therefore, *count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations.*

Now, in this are included Two things, which should mightily further their joy.

First. That all their sufferings and afflictions are for the Trial of their Faith.

God, by these, tries whether your faith be well-grounded and saving, or whether it be only temporary and flitting: he tries, whether it be weak or strong; whether it be able to stay and support itself only upon a promise, or wants the crutches of

sense and visible enjoyments to bear it up; whether it be a faith that is wrought in you only by conviction, or a faith that hath wrought in you a thorough conversion; whether it be a faith wrought in you only by evidence of the truth, or a faith that is accompanied with a sincere love of the truth. And, therefore, rejoice in your sufferings and afflictions; for these will help you to determine this great and important question. If your faith be such as can overcome the world; if it can persuade you to esteem the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of the world; if it respect more the promises of God than the threatenings of men, and future rewards more than present advantages; if it can bear both the anvil and the furnace: this is a faith, that is true and genuine; and, when it is thus tried, it shall *be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*; as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 7. Such a faith as this, that can endure the fire and lose nothing of its weight and substance, is truly precious; more precious than gold that perisheth: such a faith, that can bring you to die for Christ, will certainly bring you to live with Christ. And, have you not great cause, then, to rejoice in afflictions, which afford you a means to know, whether your graces be genuine or spurious? whether they be such as will bear his judgment and trial hereafter, by bearing afflictions and chastisements here? Certainly, that Christian hath great reason to suspect himself, who cannot rejoice that he is going to heaven, though God sends a fiery chariot to fetch him. And,

Secondly. This trial of their faith worketh Patience.

The more a Christian bears, the more he is enabled to bear: his nerves and his sinews knit and grow strong under his burdens. And, therefore also, *count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations*. For patience is, of itself, such a Christian excellency and perfection, that all trials and afflictions, which tend to increase this, are to be reckoned by us as gain and advantage. If thy sorrows and troubles add any degree of fortitude to thy patience, thou hast far more reason to rejoice, than to repine: for nothing in this present life is to be accounted good or evil, but only as it respects the advantage or disadvantage which our graces receive by it. Now, if God confirm and augment thy patience under sufferings, sufferings are mercies, afflictions are favours: he blesseth thee by chastisements; and crowneth thee with glory, even while he seems to crown thee with thorns. And wilt thou not triumph at this, O

Christian! especially, considering the end of thy patience, which is Hope, Peace, and Eternal Life? See that excellent place to this purpose, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. *We glory, saith the Apostle, in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.* Here is true cause of glory, indeed; when our patience shall cause us to ascend through these degrees, to the top and perfection of all Christian attainments.

And, from this, we may observe, by the way, That it is far better to have patience under afflictions, than to be freed from them: it is more cause of joy, to suffer the hand and will of God patiently, than not to suffer at all.

But, having spoken such great things concerning patience, the Apostle comes, in the text, to caution us about it: and tells us what qualifications it must have, to make even our afflictions the matter of our joy and comfort. *Let patience have her perfect work;* and then you shall have cause to rejoice. Let her go on to finish and accomplish what is begun and undertaken; and then shall ye *be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* It is not enough, O Christians! that ye can bear some afflictions, and that only for some time: but, if you will be perfect, as you must do the whole will of God, and that with constancy and perseverance unto the end; so you must suffer the whole will of God, and put no earlier period to your patience than to your obedience; and to neither, till God shall be pleased to put a full period to your lives. Patience ought not to prescribe, either to the kind, measure, or degree of our sufferings. Say not, therefore, “I could easily bear such or such an affliction: but this, which I now lie under, is altogether intolerable:” or, “I could cheerfully bear it, if I could see any issue out of it: but this is endless, and remediless.” Believe it; this is but an imperfect patience, and will never perfect you in grace and glory. A perfect patience stoops to the heaviest burdens; and carries them as long as God shall please, without murmuring or repining: and, if that be to the grave, it knows that what is now a load, shall then be found to be a treasure. A Christian doth but carry his own wealth, his crown, and his sceptre; which, though here they be burdensome, shall hereafter be eternally glorious.

From the words, we may observe these Two Propositions:

First. That a Christian's patience ought to finish and accomplish all the work that is proper for it, while he lies under troubles and afflictions: *Let patience have her perfect work.*

Secondly. That the perfection of patience is the perfection of a Christian: *That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

It is the first of these, of which I shall at present speak.

And, herein, I shall propound and prosecute this method.

Shew what Patience is.

What is the proper Work of patience.

When it is that patience hath its Perfect Work.

And, lastly, I shall close up all with Application.

I. WHAT IS this PATIENCE, which a Christian ought to exercise and to accomplish, when he is under sufferings?

You may take this description of it.

It is a grace of God's Spirit, wrought in the heart of a true Christian, whereby he is sweetly inclined, quietly and willingly to submit to whatsoever the Lord shall think fit to lay upon him; calming all the passions, which are apt to rise up in him against God's dispensations, with the consideration and acknowledgment of his infinite sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and mercy, in those afflictions and chastisements which he is pleased to bring upon him.

This, in the general, is this excellent Grace of Patience, which so much tends to the perfection and completing of a Christian.

Now, a little more to explain this, I shall lay down some particulars both negative and positive, in which may be more fully seen what this grace of patience is.

i. NEGATIVELY.

1. *Patience is not a stoical apathy, or a senseless stupidity, under the hand of God.*

It is no narcotic virtue, to stupify us, and take away the sense and feeling of afflictions. If it had any such opiate quality in it, it were not commendable, nor praiseworthy: for that is no suffering, which is not felt; and if patience were only to deprive a man of the feeling of his sorrows and sufferings, it would only destroy its own object, and so cease to be any longer patience. And therefore those, who are stupified and insensible under the hand of God, and who take no notice of his judgments when his hand is stretched out against them, are no more to be accounted patient, than a block is, when it is hewn and

cut: or, than the drunkard, of whom the Wise Man speaks; who, when he was stricken, was not sick; when he was beaten, felt it not. Nay, patience is so far from taking away the sense of sufferings, that it rather quickens it: there is no man, that more feels an affliction, than a Christian doth; for he refers his chastisements to his deserts: he looks inwardly, and sees his own guilt and sin, as that, which provokes God to afflict him; and this adds a great deal of gall and wormwood to the bitter cup, and makes every affliction to touch his soul and his conscience, as well as his outward man: he cannot but with grief of heart consider, that ever he should incense his Heavenly Father to use such severe discipline towards him. But a wicked man looks only upon what he suffers; he makes no reflections upon his demerits; and troubles himself no farther than God is pleased to force trouble upon him: and so he bears it, cursing his ill fate; but never complaining of his sins, that provoked the just God so to punish him.

2. *Patience doth not stifle all modest complaints and moderate sorrow* *.

A patient Christian may be well allowed this vent for his grief to work out at. Grace never destroys, but only regulates and corrects nature. It will permit thee to shed tears, so long as they run clear, and the course of them doth not stir up the mud of thy sinful passions and violent affections. It will permit thee to complain of what thou sufferest, so long as it keeps thee from complaining of that God, from whom thou sufferest. Thou mayest lawfully, without any wrong done to patience, express thy grief in all the outward and natural signs of it; only beware, lest this agitation make it exceed its due bounds and measures. We find that holy Job, who is commended to us as the mirror and great example of patience, when he had received the sad messages of the loss of his estate and of his children, *rent his mantle, and lay grovelling upon the ground*: Job. i. 20: and, that we might not think this a piece of his impatience, it is added, v. 22. *In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*. The primitive disciples are said to make *great lamentation* over Stephen; though by his death and martyrdom he highly glorified God: Acts viii. 2. Patience chiefly consists

* Ου την αθυμιαν, αλλα την επιτασιν της αθυμιας αναιρω. Το μεν γαρ αθυμειν, της φυσικης το δε πέρα τῆς μετρῆς τῆτο ποιεῖν, μακρας και παραφροσυνης, και γυναικωδης ψυχης. Chrysost. tom. v. λογ. ζα. περὶ κεκοιμ.

in a due tranquillity and composure of the mind: and those may be very impatient persons, and fret and estuate within, who yet may express but little emotion in their outward demeanour: like those latent and lurking fevers, that prey upon the spirits, when there appears but little intemperate heat in the outward limbs. And, again, a patient Christian may make use of all the doleful signs of sorrow, which God hath allowed, and nature exacts; and yet his spirit not be moved beyond its due temper and consistency: like a tree, whose boughs are agitated by every gust and storm of wind, when yet the root remains fixed and unmoved in the earth.

3. *Patience doth not oblige us to continue under afflictions, when we may lawfully and warrantably free and release ourselves from them.*

It doth not require us to court or solicit troubles. It is a sign of a vitiated and corrupted palate, if our physic taste not somewhat nauseous and unpleasing to us; and of an obstinate and incorrigible mind, if we be not careful to shun the discipline of the rod. When God lays sore and heavy afflictions upon us, we are bound, upon principles of self-preservation, to endeavour, what we may, to free ourselves from them; otherwise, we sin against nature, and the God of Nature. Therefore, if God reduce thee to poverty, by some stroke depriving thee of thy estate, it is not patience, but a lax and retchless carelessness, to sit still with thy hand in thy bosom, neglecting all honest industry to procure a comfortable subsistence, pretending that thou art willing to submit to the will and dispensations of God. If God bring sore, and perhaps mortal diseases upon thee, it is not patience, but presumption and impiety, to refuse the means which are proper for thy recovery, under pretence that thou art willing to bear whatsoever it pleaseth God to lay upon thee. And, generally, whatsoever calamity thou liest under, it is not patience, but obstinacy and contempt, to refuse deliverance, when thou mayest obtain it, without violating thy duty or God's honour.

4. *Much less doth Patience oblige us to invite sufferings.*

It is fortitude enough, if we manfully stand their shock, when they assault us; but it is temerity, to provoke and challenge them. This is but like the frenzy of the Circumcellions: a sect of mad Christians in Africa, about St. Austin's time; who were so fond of martyrdom, that they would, with

extremities, compel others to kill them; or, for want of executioners, dispatch themselves; that they might have the renown of resolution and patience. Neither is it patience to bear those invented severities, which blind devotionists inflict upon themselves: they may soon enough lash themselves into pain, but never into patience: this is a virtue, which thongs and whipcord can never teach them: nor is at all thankworthy, to bear that pain which they themselves inflict; or, if the smart vex them, they have their revenge in their own hands, and were best whip themselves again for their folly.

And, thus, I have shewed you what Patience is not.

ii. POSITIVELY.

In Patience there must be,

1. *A quiet, willing submission to the hand of God.*

Which the Scripture expreseth to us, by taking up our cross: Mat. xvi. 24. Receiving evil at the hands of God: Job ii. 10. Accepting the punishment of our iniquities: Lev. xxvi. 41. Which all signify the ready and willing submission of the soul, under whatever God shall see fit to lay upon it.

2. *A quieting of our unruly passions.*

A calming of all those impetuous storms and tempests, which are apt to arise in a man's heart, when he is under any sore and heavy sufferings. Indeed, it is impossible, but that the affections will be stirring; but patience takes off the eagerness and bitterness of them: it ought to keep them from excess, and to dulcorate and sweeten them; that the soul may not be ruffled into a tempest with them, but only gently purled with the breathings of a soft wind upon them. But, for all those turbulencies and uproars of the passions; all those violent and wild emotions, which distract reason and rend the soul to pieces, and make men unfit for the service of God and the employments of their lives: these patience ought to quell and suppress. And he, that doth not this, wants the principal part of patience; howsoever he may, possibly, command his outward expressions, and rule his actions better than he can his passions, and his body than his soul.

3. *All this must be done upon right grounds.*

Indeed, there is a natural patience: a patience that may be found in natural men, devoid of true grace; which is only a moral virtue, and proceeds only upon natural and moral prin-

ciples: * As, That it is folly, to strive against fate; and That it is equally folly, to torment ourselves about what we can help, and what we cannot help; and the like. But that patience, which I am now speaking of, is a Christian Grace, and proceeds not only upon such arguments and principles: no, it looks far higher; and eyes the sovereignty of God, to which it is our duty to submit: and it eyes also his wisdom and his goodness, to which it is our interest to submit. It looks off from the absolute nature of the affliction, considered as it is in itself, to the relative nature of it, as it is dispensed to us by God; and so concludes, that though the cup in itself be bitter, yet, in our Father's hand, it is salutary; and knows that it shall work for our gain and advantage, and make us partakers of God's holiness here, and of his glory hereafter.

And thus we see what this grace of Patience is.

II. The next thing is, to shew, WHAT IS THE PROPER WORK OF PATIENCE.

And that I shall endeavour to do, in these following particulars.

i. The first work of patience is, as I have told you, THE QUIETING AND COMPOSING THE SPIRIT OF THE AFFLICTED.

He is calm and sedate within, though his outward state and condition be full of storms and tempests; and saith, with St. Paul, when he had spoken of the bonds and afflictions that awaited him, Acts xx. 24. *None of these things move me.* But an impatient man flies out against heaven and earth, blasphemes God and curses men, rages at his sufferings and gnaws the very chains that tie him up: and, instead of humbling himself under God's mighty hand, is exasperated by his punishment; and, with that impious king, cries out, in all his extremity and anguish, *This evil is of the Lord: why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?*

ii. Another work of patience is, TO PUT A STOP TO ALL IMMODERATE COMPLAINTS.

It puts a man to silence; and lays a check upon all the intemperate eruptions of our grief and passions. *I was dumb,* saith David, *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it:* Ps. xxxix. 9. It dares not so much as whimper against God;

* *Feras, non culpes, quod vitari non potest.* Pub. ap. Gell. Noct. At. l. xvii. c. 14.

nor saucily expostulate with his infinite sovereignty, why he should bring such afflictions upon us. It is God, that hath done it: and, what! shall we, vile dust and ashes, controul his proceedings, or take upon us to censure any of his dispensations? See a most notable instance of this patience, in Aaron: when his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were destroyed by a most unparalleled judgment, and Moses brings him the sad tidings; tidings, which, one would expect, should have caused him to break forth into some passionate complaint; it is said, *That Aaron held his peace*: Lev. x. 3. he had not a word to say: it was the Lord's doing; and, as it was wonderful, so it was just and righteous, in his eyes.

iii. Another work of patience under sufferings, is SELF RESIGNATION TO THE SOVEREIGN WILL AND DISPOSAL OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

It takes a man off from his own bottom; and makes him renounce his own interests and concerns, and lay down his all; all his designs, all his hopes, all his possessions and enjoyments; at the feet of God:* desiring his wisdom to choose for him; and to carve him out that portion, which he knows to be most fitting and convenient.

This is the chief and most principal work of patience.

And there be two notable ingredients, which go to the composition of it; Self-Denial, and Submission.

1. *Patience works the soul to a self-denying frame and temper.*

Fretfulness and impatience do always proceed from self-love. When we are deeply engaged in an eager pursuit of that which we think advantageous to us, we are presently apt to storm and tumultuate, if any cross providence interpose, to entangle our designs and defeat our expectations: for, whilst we set up ourselves as our highest and utmost end, and seek only our own temporal profit and commodity, we must needs take it immoderately, if any thing succeed contrary to our hopes and desires. A cross lies very heavy, and is an unsupportable load, upon a selfish man. And he, that makes this world his all, must needs look upon himself as utterly ruined and undone,

* Τολμησον αναβλεψας προς τον Θεον ηπειν, οτι χρω μοι λοιπον εις ο αν θελης, ομογνωμονω σοι, σος ημι· εδεν παραιτημαι των σοι δοκουντων· οπη θελης, αγε· ην θελης εσθητα, περιθες· αρχην με θελης, ιδιωτευην, μενην, φευγην, πνευσθαι, πλαστην; εγω σοι υπερ απαντων τετων προς της ανθρωπινης απολογησομαι. Arriani Epictet. l. ii. c. 16.

if God take from him that, wherein he placeth his highest felicity: and, therefore, no wonder, if he break out into passionate and intemperate exclamations: as Micah justified his outcries after the children of Dan; *Ye have taken away my gods.....and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?* so, exhort a selfish man to patience under any affliction, or loss, or calamity, that God hath brought upon him; alas! his earthly comforts are his gods: they are his all; and he cannot but account it a strange unreasonableness, that you should blame him for his passion, when his idols, his gods, and that, wherein he placed his only content and confidence, is taken from him. But a truly patient soul puts a lower rate and estimate upon these things: he values them, indeed, as comforts; otherwise, there could be no trial, and so no patience in the loss of them: but he values them not as his chief nor his only good; otherwise, he could have no patience in sustaining the loss of them: let God sequester his estate and reduce him to extreme poverty, scourge his body and lay upon him all the most racking pains and languishing diseases that life can subsist under, snatch away his friends and mow down all his nearest and dearest relations round about him, cut off all his props and worldly dependencies; yet, still, he looks not upon himself as undone: still he hath his God, and his Christ, and his grace left: his treasure is secure; and all the loss, that he sustains, is but in his accessory good things, which he never otherwise received, but with condition and under the burden to part with them freely and quietly whensoever it should please the Great Proprietor of all things to call for them. Patience works a man to a great indifferency to these worldly enjoyments: if God be pleased to spare them, he accepts it with thankfulness; or, if he see good to deprive him of them, he quarrels not at his Father's providence; for, still, God leaves him more than he takes, so long as he leaves him himself: they are but his smaller concerns, that God toucheth him in; and, what matter of importance is it, if God prune off his excrescencies, when as this tends only to make him more beautiful and more fruitful? God doth but deny him that, wherein he hath learned to deny himself. And,

2. As patience works the soul to a self-denying, so it does likewise to a *submissive frame and temper*.

When it hath brought a man to renounce his own will, it then resolves him into the will of God: it takes him out of his own

hand, and puts him into God's. Here patience finds its footing, in the deepest waters of affliction: upon this ground it stands, and upon this it fixeth: "It is the will and good pleasure of my Father, that thus and thus it shall be with me; and, therefore, so be it." Indeed, all religion lies in conforming our wills to the will of God: that there should be but one will between God and us; and that this should be his most wise and righteous will. The Will of his Precept he hath made known unto us by his Word; and to that we ought to submit our wills, by a cheerful performance of what he hath commanded. The Will of his Purpose he makes known unto us by his Providence; and to that we ought to submit, by a quiet bearing of whatsoever he shall see good to inflict. Art thou poor, or despised, or diseased, afflicted by God, or persecuted by men? set patience on work: and this will lighten thy burden, and ease thee of thy sorrows; by reflecting, That it is the will of God to have it so: yea, and thy will shall run into, and mingle with his; so that thou shalt suffer willingly whatsoever he shall please to bring upon thee. Indeed, we ought not so to will and affect sufferings, as causelessly to involve ourselves in them: we may abhor them, as they are in themselves considered; and, by all lawful means, seek to secure or free ourselves from them. But, yet, a patient Christian wills them, though not absolutely, yet conditionally: he wills that the will of God should take place, and have its accomplishment. And, indeed, there is great reason he should do so; for he knows that the issue will be to his exceeding great gain and advantage. And, therefore, if the Lord will, he dare not gainsay; but, with a holy meekness, gives in his vote, and surrenders up his will, as no longer his, but melted and resolved into the will of his Father. It was a most divine and heavenly speech of the Heathen Philosopher Epictetus: "I will say unto God, Did I ever find fault, or accuse thy government of affairs? I was sick, because thou wouldest: others also have been sick, but I willingly. I was poor, because thou wouldest; but therefore joyful in my poverty, since it was thy pleasure. I never was in authority, because thou wouldest not; and thou knowest, that therefore I never desired authority. Did I ever appear before thee with a sad and dejected countenance, as one, that had suffered a repulse, or been defeated of his hopes? Behold, I am ready to obey whatever thou shalt enjoin: if it be to quit the stage, I go. But, before I leave the world, I render unto thee my most humble thanks, that

thou hast been pleased to admit me into the theatre, to be a spectator and admirer of thy works."* This was the profession of a Heathen. See the practice of this excellent patience, in some Scripture Examples. When Samuel had delivered to Eli the sad doom, which God had pronounced against his house, *It is the Lord*, saith that good old man: *let him do what seemeth him good*: 1 Sam. iii. 18: it is the Lord, whose sovereignty, whose wisdom and goodness are infinite; and, therefore, though his present ways seem dark and obscure to me, I resign up myself wholly unto him: *let him do whatsoever seemeth him good*. And so, likewise, David delivers himself up unto God: 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. *If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me the ark and place of his habitation: But, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him*. And thus, likewise, a far greater than both these, even our Lord Jesus Christ, yields up himself wholly to his Father's will and pleasure: Luke xxii. 42. *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done*. Christ is willing not to have his own will: and so every patient Christian brings his will to this submission; that it is his will, that not his, but God's will should be fulfilled.

That is, therefore, a Third Work of Patience; Self-Resignation to the Will and Disposal of God.

iv. Another work of patience, is, A HOLY ENDEARING OF OUR AFFLICTIONS TO US; when it brings us to account them precious, and to reckon them as choice mercies and favours bestowed upon us.

Patience will make the soul thankful for corrections; esteeming it a token of God's special regard and condescension towards us, that he will vouchsafe to afflict us. We are all prone to think, that God never minds us, but when he is continually

* Θελω ἡπῆν τῷ Θεῷ· Μη τι σοι ποί' ἐνεκαλεσα; μη τι ἐμεμφαμην σε τὴν διοίκησιν; Ἐνοσησα, ὅτι ἠθελησας· καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἔκων. Πενης ἐγενομην σε θελοντῶ, ἀλλὰ χαιρων. Οὐκ ἠρξα, ὅτι συ ἐκ ἠθελησας· οὐδέ ποί' ἐπεθυμησα ἀρχης. Μη τι με τιτῶ ἐνεκα συγνώτερον ἡδες; μη εἰ προσήλθον σοι ποίε φαιδρῶ τῷ προσώπῳ, ἔτοιμῶ ἢ τι ἐπίλασσης, ἢ τι σημαίνεις; Νυν με θέλεις ἀπελθεῖν ἐκ τῆς πανηγυρεως; ἀπείμῃ· χάριν σοι ἔχω πασας, ὅτι ἠξίωσας με συμπανηγυρίσαι σοι, καὶ εἶδεν ἔργα τὰ σα, καὶ τὴν διοίκησιν οὐ συμπαρακολοβήθησαι σοι. Epictetus Arriani, lib. iii. cap. 5.

heaping new mercies and enjoyments upon us; and if any cross or calamity befall us, we presently fear, that God hath forgotten us: but patience teacheth a Christian to believe, that, in every affliction, whatsoever it be, God doth most particularly regard our concerns; that he is as mindful of us, when he chastises, as when he favours us. And, therefore, we should account afflictions as dear a pledge of God's love, as prosperity and indulgence. Nay, indeed, we have as much need of the one, as of the other: for, as we are apt to be too much dejected, if we see none but black and louring days; so we are, on the other side, apt to be puffed up with a continual uninterrupted course of prosperity, to grow wanton and secure, to forget ourselves and the God of all our mercies. And, as weeds grow fastest in a fat and rank soil, so our corruptions grow and thrive, and are ready to overrun our souls, when our outward state and condition is most prosperous and successful: and, therefore, God's love and care of us constrain him sometimes to use severe discipline, to nip those luxuriancies, and to cut us short in our temporal enjoyments; which else, he sees, we should only turn into provision for our lusts. And, did we but seriously consider the great improvements we might make of afflictions and the great advantages we might gain, how they serve for the exercise of our graces, the confirming of our hope, the evidence of our inheritance, the seed of future joys; patience would not only account them tolerable but comfortable, and advance from being patience to be rejoicing and triumph. Therefore the Apostle, speaking of persecuted saints, saith, *they took joyfully, the spoiling of their goods; knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance*: Heb. x. 34. And thus David (as once his Jonathan) tastes honey from the top of the rod: Ps. xxiii. 4. *Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me*: not only God's staff to support him, but even his rod to chastise and correct him, were sweet and comfortable to him.

That is a Fourth Work of Patience, to endear and sweeten Afflictions to us.

v. Another work of patience is, THE RECONCILING OF A MAN TO THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS SUFFERINGS: to make him willing to forgive them himself; and to pray to God for their pardon and forgiveness, who is far more offended by them than we can be.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, who is set forth to us in Scrip-

ture, as the great example of all grace, but especially of this of patience, pours out his prayers for those who were pouring out his blood: Luke xxiii. 34. *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* And his holy martyr, St. Stephen, when his murderers were pelting him with stones, pelts not them with curses and imprecations, as an impatient man would do; but, with Christian meekness, kneels upon that ground to which they were beating him, and prays, that God would not lay that sin to their charge: Acts vii. 60. And, by this one effect of patience, we may easily perceive, that it is a grace very rare to be found in our days: we look upon it as too phlegmatic a piece of Christianity, to pass by an injury unrevenged: we are grown testy and choleric; and, when we apprehend ourselves in the least wronged, if we draw not our swords, yet we draw our tongues, which are full as sharp and trenchant; and shoot out our arrows, even bitter words; and nourish an implacable enmity in our hearts, against all whom we apprehend to have been the causes or occasions of those wrongs and sufferings which we undergo. What doth this argue, but that we look not at God in our sufferings? we eye not his hand, nor his providence, in bringing them upon us: we consider not, that their malice is overruled by his wisdom; and that he makes use of it, to accomplish his own purposes and designs: and so, while, like dogs, we bite and snarl at the stones that are thrown at us, we do but interpretatively fly at him that casts them; and would even rend him in pieces, were he within our reach and power. Whereas*, a truly patient spirit looks above and beyond the wickedness and malice of men, to the justice and wisdom of God: and this suppresseth the ebullitions of his passions and all attempts of revenge, which else his wrath and corrupt nature would prompt him to take. See a notable instance of this in David, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. when Shimei came out, like a man distracted with rage and passion, and flung dust and curses confusedly into the air together: *Let him curse, saith David, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David:* he represeth his own and his captain's revenge upon that wretch, and maintaineth the peace and tranquillity of his patience, because he looked beyond the instrument, unto God, who righteously makes use of the wickedness of men for his own ends.

* Εἰ δὲι χαλεπαινέιν ἐν τοῖς λυπηροῖς, ἑαυτῷ μᾶλλον οἰησεται χαλεπαινέιν δεῖν, ἢ τῷ καλῶντι τὴν πονηρίαν Θεῷ διὰ τῶν ὀργάνων τῆς δίκης. Hierocles, pag. 122.

That is a Fifth Work of Patience.

vi. Another work of patience is, TO OBSTRUCT ALL DISHONOURABLE OR UNLAWFUL WAYS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THOSE SUFFERINGS UNDER WHICH WE LIE.

Patience will not suffer a man to accept of deliverance, if he cannot free the honour of God and the purity of his own conscience from stain, as well as his outward man from trouble: he will not make such an unworthy commutation, as to leave his God or his conscience to suffer in his stead: no; rather let bonds, reproach, afflictions, and death do their worst upon him, than that he should hazard his soul, to save his skin: if he cannot break through a sad and entangling providence but by breaking a command, let the worst come that can come, he keeps his station; and will not move one foot without the compass of the word, though he might thereby escape all his sorrows and sufferings: he is resolved that the Devil shall never bail him; nor will he, by any unlawful arts and methods, wrest himself out of God's hands, to put himself into Satan's. This patience it was, that made the holy martyrs, spoken of Heb. xi. generously scorn to accept of deliverance, when it was tendered to them upon unworthy and unwarrantable terms: they were not so stupid, nor so profuse and lavish of their lives, as to cast them away, could they have saved both them and their religion too; but, when the condition of their temporal safety was their eternal destruction, when they could no longer live here unless they consented to die for ever, welcome then death and torments, the rack and the fire, welcome the prison or the stake, to which the laws of God fastened them more straitly than even their fetters and their chains. But impatience puts a man upon any base and wicked means, to free himself from his present sufferings: thus Saul's impatience in waiting for Samuel forceth him, first, to offer sacrifice, whereby he forfeited his kingdom; and, afterwards, his impatience to know the success of his affairs drives him to consult with a witch, whereby he lost his life. And, how many forlorn wretches are there, who, through impatience under the temporal evils which they suffer, desperately cut off their own lives, and thereby plunge themselves into eternal torments!

And thus, in these Six particulars, you see what is the proper Work of Patience. It is: to quiet and compose the spirits of

the afflicted: to put a stop to all immoderate and murmuring complaints: to make men willingly resign up themselves unto the sovereign will and disposal of God: to sweeten and endear afflictions to them: to render them placable and reconcilable to the instruments of their sufferings: and, lastly, to obstruct all dishonourable and unlawful ways of deliverance.

And that is the Second General propounded.

III. The Third General is, to shew, WHEN IT IS, that Patience hath its Perfect Work.

To this I answer:

i. Patience hath then its perfect work, WHEN IT IS PROPORTIONABLE TO THE SUFFERINGS AND AFFLICTIONS UNDER WHICH WE LIE; and that, both in Duration and Fortitude.

And therefore,

1. *If thy afflictions and sorrows be of long continuance, thy patience, that it may be perfect, must be prolonged.*

It must be lengthened out according to the affliction; nor must we faint, till it shall please God to put a period to his chastisements and our sufferings. If thy patience wear off one day before thy trouble doth, it hath not its perfect work. Sometimes, God doth bring such afflictions and trials upon his people, as shall hold them work all their days, and scarce afford them any intermission and breathing-time: and, if it prove so with thee, know, that thy patience ought to run parallel with thy trouble. If God will not take thy burden off, but make thee travel with it till the evening, till thou liest down to take thy rest in the grave, thy patience must hold out till then, if thou wouldst have it perfect. And, though the Apostle speaks of *our light afflictions, which are but for a moment*: yet remember, that, as they are light only in comparison with the intolerable torments of hell; so, likewise, they are many time short, only in comparison with eternity: they are short, only because they are not endless; but, yet, this short moment may hold out as long as thy whole life. Now, then, O Christian! look upon thyself as a traveller; and make account, that whatsoever burden God is pleased to lay upon thee, he may perhaps not take it off till thou comest to thy inn, to take up thy lodging in the grave. If he discharge thee of it sooner, acknowledge his mercy; but be sure thou discharge not thy patience, before God dischargeth thy burden.

2. Sometimes our sorrows and sufferings are very deep, our burdens very heavy and pressing: and God brings upon us not only long, but sharp and severe sufferings; such as he threatened, Deut. xxviii. 59. *Great plagues, and of long continuance; and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.* He may give thee a deep draught of the bitter cup, and squeeze into it the very spirit and quintessence of gall and wormwood. Now, in this case, *that thy patience may be perfect, it must be strong*, as well as lasting: it must have nerves and sinews in it, to bear weighty burdens. When thou canst take up the heaviest load and go away roundly with it, when thou canst endure the sharpest methods of cauters and incisions with a manly spirit, then is thy patience perfect. But, *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is but small*; Prov. xxiv. 10.

ii. That our patience may be perfect, IT MUST BE PROPORTIONABLE, ALSO, TO THE NEED OF THE SUFFERER.

For then hath patience its perfect work, when a man bears whatsoever is necessary for him. We suffer, as a sick man takes physic: though the potion be bitter, yet he must take such a quantity as is prescribed for the cure of his disease. Truly, our afflictions are but medicines for our souls: it may be, a small quantity, or a few doses, is not sufficient to work out the malignity of our distemper; and, therefore, we must continue and submit, until our Great Physician hath perfected his cure upon us; and then is our patience perfect. Possibly, God sees thee proud and arrogant in thy prosperity; and, therefore, he brings some sharp affliction upon thee, that may lance the swelling tumor of thy mind, and let out thy corruption: perhaps, he sees thy disease is covetousness, and too much love of this world; and, therefore, to cure this dropsy in thee, he deals with thee as physicians do with hydropic patients; takes from thee that, which, though it please thy appetite, yet miserably increaseth thy distemper: perhaps, he sees thou art falling asleep in carnal security; and, therefore, to awaken and rouse thee out of this lethargy, he makes use of incisions and cauters. Now, both the cure and thy patience are then perfect, when, of a proud and high-minded person, he hath brought thee to an humble and meek spirit; when, of a worldly and self-seeking person, he hath made thee a public-spirited and self-denying Christian; when, of a drowsy and secure, he hath made thee a vigilant, zealous, and active Christian.

iii. That thy patience may be perfect, IT MUST BE A JOYFUL PATIENCE.

Thou must not suffer, and repine: this is only patience extorted, and by force: but suffer, and rejoice*; and bless and thank that God, taking from thee; whom thou didst bless, giving to thee. And, as we have the greatest cause of joy, so we should then, especially, shew it, if at any time we may suffer for the testimony of Jesus, and the sake of a good conscience. It is said, Acts v. 41. the Apostles rejoiced, *that they were counted worthy to suffer...for his name.*

And thus I have, in brief, shewed, when it is that patience hath her perfect work.

IV. That, which remains, is only to ENFORCE upon you this exhortation of the Apostle: that all, who name the name of Christ, the great Example of Patience, would strive to get; and, having got, to exercise; and, by exercise, to strengthen and perfect, this most excellent grace.

And, in prosecuting this, I shall observe the following method.

Give several Motives and Inducements unto patience.

Shew the several distempers of a man's spirit, which are great Hindrances of patience.

Give the Cure of these; and lay down some Means, that may be helpful to advance and strengthen patience in us.

i. For the MOTIVES to patience: they are many and powerful.

And such, indeed, they had need be, to persuade our fretful and froppish natures to the exercise of so hard a grace. There are none of us, who at all reflect upon the working of our own spirits, but find it a difficult matter to keep down the estuations of our unruly passions. When a cross providence intervenes, either to frustrate our expectations or deprive us of our present enjoyments, they will mutiny and rebel: so that it is almost as easy an undertaking, to persuade the sea into a calm, when winds and storms beat boisterously upon it; as it is to compose the minds of men into a smooth and equal temper, when they are assaulted with any tempestuous providences.

Yet grace can work those wonders, which nature cannot: and

* Μεγάλη ἐστὶν ἀθλῆται δεικασθαι καὶ νικᾶν. Ignat. Ep. ad Polycarp.

that God, to whom all things are possible, can make our hearts calm, when our outward condition is tempestuous; and, though he lets forth his winds upon us, can keep us from being discomposed and ruffled by them; and lay the same command upon our passions, as Christ did upon the waves; *Peace, be still.*

And there be several Considerations, that will tend mightily to hush all the disturbances of our spirits, under all our sorrows and sufferings. As,

1. *That there is nothing more necessary for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, than the work and exercise of patience.*

What saith the Apostle, Heb. x. 36? *Ye have need of patience; that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* It is a most necessary grace for a Christian: not only as all other graces are necessary to make him such, for so we have need of them all, at least, in the root and habit, and in the proper seasons for the exercise of them; but the Apostle speaks it *signanter*, and by way of special remark, *Ye have Need of patience*: need of the continual exercise, strength, and perfection of this grace.

And this especial necessity of patience will appear, if we consider,

(1) That our whole life is but a scene of sorrows and troubles.

They spring up thick about us, and surround us in every condition: put thyself in what posture and state of life thou wilt, still thou shalt find something to molest and disquiet thee; for our rest is not here. Who can recount the personal, domestical, or more public sorrows, which he undergoes; as if breath were only given unto us, to spend it in sighs and groans? The truth is, we pass through the world, as men that run the gauntlet, and must receive a lash and stripe everp step we take. *Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*: Job. v. 7: he is born to it: it is his inheritance and portion, that descends to him from his father Adam; entailed upon him by the curse of the Law annexed to our first transgression: and born unto it, *as the sparks fly upward*; that is, our troubles come upon us naturally and spontaneously, as is the ascending motion of sparks; and they are as thick and fiery, as those *sons of the burning coal*, as the original expression hath it. Now, if sorrow and sufferings do thus make up the greatest part of our lives, is it not absolutely necessary to fortify our hearts with patience, quietly and meekly to bear whatsoever it shall seem good to the all-wise providence of God to inflict upon us? Afflictions are

necessary for us. *If need be*, saith the Apostle, *ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*: 1 Pet. i. 6: more necessary and more advantageous than prosperity; to nip our luxuriances, to rouse our sloth, and awaken our security; to make us remember God and ourselves. And, shall afflictions be thus necessary for us, and not patience to undergo them? while thou livest in this world, thou sailest upon a rough sea: the waves and the billows work high: and wilt thou expose thyself to these storms, like a forlorn vessel without helm, or tackling, or ballast, to be tossed up and down upon the back of every wave, ready to be swallowed up every moment, or dashed against every rock in thy way? Patience is the ballast of the soul, that will keep it from rolling and tumbling in the greatest storms: and he, that will venture out without this to make him sail even and steady, will certainly make shipwreck, and drown himself; first, in the cares and sorrows of this world; and, then, in perdition.

(2) Consider, that patience is necessary to alleviate and lighten the afflictions we suffer.

The same burden shall not, by this means, have the same weight in it. There is a certain skill in taking up our load upon us, to make it sit handsome and easy; whereas, others, that take it up untowardly, find it most cumbersome and oppressive: let the very same affliction befall two persons; the one, a patient, meek, and self-resigning soul; the other, a proud, fretful wretch, that repines and murmurs at every cross and every disappointment; and, with how much more ease shall the one bear it, than the other! the burden is the very same, but only the one is sound and whole, and it doth not wring nor pinch him; but the other's impatience hath galled him, and every burden is more grievous and intolerable to him, because it lies upon a raw and sore spirit. And, therefore, since afflictions and sufferings are unavoidable in this life, which is a vale of misery and tears, if thou wouldst make thy sufferings easy and supportable, fret not thyself at any dispensation of the Divine Providence: keep thy spirit sound; and, whatsoever burden it shall please God to lay upon thee, add not to it by thy impatience: be not ingenious to torment thyself, by thy own troublesome thoughts and reflections; nor to find out circumstances to aggravate thy sufferings: swallow down the bitter draught, that God puts into thy hand, without straining it through thy teeth; for so the trouble will be sooner over and less distasteful. It is not so much the wearing, as the striving with our yoke, that wrings and galls us: and, as it is

with beasts caught in a snare, so is it with impatient men; the more they struggle, the closer and faster they draw the knot, and make their sufferings more uneasy and their escape more impossible. But patience gives the soul some kind of scope, and liberty under afflictions: they may surround him; but at some distance: he may be *troubled on every side*; but *yet* he is *not distressed*: he may be God's prisoner; but yet he is not cast into gyves and fetters: and, though the affliction come very close to his outward man and his temporal estate, yet, so long as *patience hath her perfect work*, it can never corrode or eat into his spirit: in this sense, the iron enters not into his soul.

That is, therefore, the First Motive to Patience: it is a most necessary grace, because it is necessary in this life that we should suffer; and nothing doth more alleviate and mitigate our sufferings, than a patient bearing of them.

2. Another motive to patience may be, to consider, *who is the Author and Inflicter of all the sufferings which thou undergoest*.

Possibly, when thou eyest only the instruments of thy sufferings, their disingenuous, unworthy, and spiteful way of proceeding, thy impatience may take advantage to fret and torment thee: but, if thou wouldst look up to the principal cause, thou wouldst find abundant reason meekly to submit; for it is the hand and dispensation of God.

There are many things in this reflection, that should quiet and stablish our minds, under all the afflictions and trials which we are exercised with. As,

(1) Consider, That God is the absolute and uncontrollable Sovereign of all the World.

He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven, and in earth, and with all thing;: *and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?* Dan. iv. 35. It is in vain to *strive* with him; *for he giveth not account of any of his matters*: Job xxxiii. 13. Consider, you are in God's hands, but as so much clay in the hands of the potter: and wilt thou, O arrogant man, dispute with him, why he hath so formed thee? or, why he thus breaks thee? Satisfy thyself, that it is fit and reasonable it should be with thee as it is: for so is the sovereign will of God; and his will being the first and supreme cause, must needs be the highest reason in the world. Canst thou contend with the Almighty? or wrest either his scepter or his rod out of his hand? if not, what folly and madness is it, to vex and fret thyself at the accomplishment

of that will upon thee, which never was, never can be frustrated? We may impotently, in both senses of the word, wish and desire this or that to come to pass: but, alas! where is our power, where is our authority, to effect it? Shall thy designs give laws to his purposes? or, will the course of second causes stoop to thy appointment, or run according to thy arbitration? It will only be our torture to struggle, when it is not in our power to dispose. And know, that thou dost insolently invade the prerogative of the Almighty, when thou repinest at any of his dispensations: for it shews a rebellious will in thee, to rescind his decrees, and disturb the method and order of his administration of affairs.

(2) Consider, That God is not only our Sovereign, but he is our Proprietor.

All our comforts and enjoyments, yea our very selves, are infinitely more God's, than they are ours: he hath but lent them to us, for our present use and service; but the title and propriety are still his own. And what hath busy and pragmatical man to do, to intermeddle with that, wherein he is least of all concerned? Thy children, thy estate, thy liberty, yea thy life itself, whatsoever is dearest to thee and most prized by thee, is not so much thine, as it is God's. And what presumption then is it, to prescribe unto him, or to murmur against him, for disposing as he pleaseth, what so entirely appertains unto him! may he not do what he will with his own? Certainly, this consideration alone, were it well wrought into our hearts, would be sufficient to allay all our impatience, and to silence all our repining thoughts: That, since all is God's, we ought rather to bless him, and gratefully to acknowledge his goodness, that he hath spared us any comforts thus long, than to complain of his rigour and severity, that he is pleased again to call for them from us, and to require again what he only lent but never alienated.

(3) Consider the Relation, wherein God stands unto thee.

He is not only thy Sovereign and Proprietor, which are titles of awe and majesty; but he is thy Father, which is the most sweet and endearing title of love and mercy: a Father, whose bowels yearn and roll towards thee, while he is correcting thee: Jer. xxxi. 20. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord: he undertakes this work of correction unwillingly; and, as it were, by constraint; For he doth not*

afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men: Lam. iii. 33: were it not that he sees this discipline of the rod is necessary for thee, thou shouldst never have other from him, but smiles and favours. Nay, God hath given us the highest expression of his tenderness, that ever could proceed from the heart of the most affectionate and compassionate father: Isa. lxiii. 9. *In all their affliction, he was afflicted*: as a tender-hearted father chastiseth his children, with as much grief and regret as they themselves feel it; so doth God. And, should not this, then, be a prevailing motive unto patience, to consider, That it is our Father who chastiseth us; a Father, who is infinitely gracious and merciful, and whose mercy and pity alone put him upon this his strange and unwelcome work? shall I murmur and fret, because his goodness takes this necessary way of expressing itself towards me? because he is not so cruel, as to destroy me, by sparing me; and eternally to damn me, rather than, if need be, for a short time to cross and grieve me? Certainly, if there be any childlike ingenuity in us, we ought rather to kiss the rod, and the hand that lays it on; to bless and praise God, that he expresseth so much of a Father as to correct us. The Apostle strongly enforceth this argument: Heb. xii. 9, 10. Our earthly fathers correct us, and we give them reverence: how much more shall we *be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits*, since he never chastiseth us out of passion and humour, as earthly parents often do, but *for our profit*? When we can thus look off from the absolute, to the relative nature of our afflictions; from them, as they are evil in themselves, to them, as they are in the hand and dispose of our Heavenly Father; we shall find more cause of joy and comfort, than of sorrow and repining. Thus, our Blessed Saviour supports himself: John xviii. 11. *The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink thereof*? Though we loath the cup of afflictions, in itself considered, as it hath many bitter ingredients in it; yet, when we look upon it, as it is held out to us in the hand of God, this will sweeten that bitter potion, and make us look upon every dispensation as a mercy.

(4) Consider, again; That it is an infinitely Wise God that afflicts thee; and, therefore, thou mayest well acquiesce in his providences.

Indeed, if afflictions did only befall us by blind chance; if they sprung up only out of the dust, as occurrences merely casual and contingent, without any intelligent nature to overrule and guide them; we might possibly give vent to our impatience,

by exclaiming against ill-hap and bad fortune; and be, if not more reasonable, yet, at least, less impious: but, when all events are eternally scanned and premeditated; when infinite wisdom hath sat in council, and maturely deliberated every minute circumstance of our lives; when there is not the least dust that falls into our eye, not the least trip or wrench of thy foot, but Infinite Wisdom foresaw and consulted about it, whether it should so fall out or no, infinite ages before the foundations of the world were laid; it is very foolish, as well as very wicked, for us, blind men, to find fault with the resolutions and conduct of divine wisdom and fore-knowledge. God's providence is described, by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. i. to be a great wheel, *full of eyes*: now, though he bring this wheel over thee, and crush thee by it; yet know, O Christian! that it sees its way. All thy sorrows and sufferings are chosen out for thee, by that God, who doth inflict them.

[1] He knows the just Proportion of what thou art to undergo.

He is the Wise Physician, that knows what ingredients, and what quantities of each, are fittest for thee to take; and will so temper them, both for measure and time, as shall be most proper and healthful for thee. And, if he prescribe thee a large and a bitter draught, appease thyself, and quiet the tumults of thy passions, with this consideration, That it was his infinite skill and art, that directed him so to do.

[2] He knows and considers the Events and the Consequences of things, which are hid in a profound obscurity from us short-sighted creatures.

Possibly, he intends thee the greatest mercy, when he brings the sorest trials upon thee; and, by pruning and lopping thee, designs only, that thou shalt grow the more stately and beautiful. His wisdom often so manageth our affairs, as to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life itself out of death: and that, of which at present we cannot conceive otherwise but that it tends to our ruin, proves afterwards the only means of our safety and preservation. And, therefore, since we ourselves are so infinitely foolish and God so infinitely wise, we may well, with patience and thankfulness, give up the dispose and government of ourselves unto him: for, believe it; undoubtedly, if God should model his providences according to our methods and contrivances, he need take no other way to curse and ruin us. Again,

(5) Consider, God is a Faithful God.

And this should be another encouragement, patiently to bear whatsoever he shall lay upon us. Thus the Apostle urgeth it, 1 Pet. iv. 19. *Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* He is faithful to his word and promise, which he will certainly fulfil, in his due and appointed season.

Now, as there is no condition that needs more, so there is no condition that hath more promises made to it, than an afflicted and suffering condition.

[1] He hath promised a Moderation of all our afflictions.

1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* He will proportion our burden to our strength, and not lay heavy loads upon weak shoulders.

[2] He hath promised his Presence with, and his Comforts and Assistance to, the afflicted.

Isa. xliii. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* And, certainly, the presence and the consolations of God are such, as can sweeten the most bitter condition, and make the waters of Marah pleasant and refreshing.

[3] He hath promised to rescue thee out of all thy Dangers, and to deliver thee out of all thy Sorrows and Troubles.

Job v. 19. *He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven, and there shall no evil touch thee.* However,

[4] He hath made thee that universal promise, which shines among all the rest, as the sun in the firmament, and were enough, if there were no other besides, to give light and comfort to a believing soul, under the saddest circumstances; That all our sorrows and sufferings shall, in the end, evaporate to our Gain and Advantage.

Rom. viii. 28. *All things shall work together for good, to them that love God.* He can make the top of the rod yield us honey, and the eater meat: for he is almighty, and he will do it; for he is faithful, who hath promised. And, what folly then is it, to murmur and complain of our afflictions, when as our very afflictions are our great advantages! and could we, with a wish,

transform our condition, and make it such as we fancy and desire, yet it would be far worse with us than now it is.

Well then, O Christian! though thou mayst be troubled when thou lookest to second causes, and to the instruments and occasions of thy afflictions; yet, look unto God, the great Guide and Governor of all things: consider his Sovereignty, his Propriety, his Wisdom, his Fatherly Mercy, and his Faithfulness; and, if impatience hath not tainted thy very reason, and fretted thee out of all use of serious thoughts and reflections, thou wilt find abundant cause to bear all thy burdens, not only with submission, but with thankfulness.

(6) To this let me add one consideration more concerning God; and that is, that he is *the God of Patience*.

So he is styled, Rom. xv. 5. *The God of Patience*. And that, not only as he is the God, that requires patience from us; not only as he is the God, that gives patience to us; not only as he is the God, that doth own and crown patience in us: but as he is the God, that doth himself exercise infinite patience towards us. He bears more from us, than we can possibly bear from him. He bears our sins, whereas we only bear his chastisements: and sin is infinitely more contrary to God's nature, than suffering can be unto ours. And what strange disingenuity is it, when we daily offer many horrid affronts and indignities against his Divine Majesty, and yet expect that he should put them up and pass them by with patience; yet, that we should murmur and fret, and cannot quietly bear the least correction from the hand of God! Certainly, we allow ourselves strange privilege and advantage, that we can be content, the Great God of Heaven and Earth should daily suffer by our sins; and yet cannot be content, when we suffer a little by his chastisement.

Thus, did we but well consider the Author and Inflicter of all our sufferings, it would much help us patiently to undergo them.

That is a Second Motive.

3. Consider *what thou hast deserved*.

And this will be a most unanswerable argument for patience under what thou feelest. If God should extract the very spirit and quintessence out of all the most bitter things in the world, and put this potion in thy cup, and make thee drink of it all thy days; yet, all this is nothing to what thou hast deserved. When thou liest under any pain or sickness, or whatsoever misery and affliction it be, think with thyself, "This is nothing,

to one gripe of hell-torments; much less, to an eternity of them." Think with thyself, "Though this be grievous which I now suffer; yet, how happy is it for me, that I am not now in hell! If I now feel so much pain, when I am but a little touched with his finger; oh! what intolerable anguish should I have felt, had I now lain under the furious strokes of his almighty arm! And shall I howl, and fret, and be impatient, when I have infinitely more reason to bless God, that it is no worse with me, than to complain, that it is thus?" Thus, I say, compare your sorrows and sufferings with your deserts; and this will be a most effectual means to excite you to a patient bearing of them.

4. A fourth motive to patience may be the consideration of *the great Benefits and Advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions.*

It is true, that afflictions, in themselves considered, can have no great encomiums made of them: for, so, they are rather pernicious and destructive, than any way conducive unto the welfare of those that suffer them: that man must have worne off all impressions of natural good and evil, whoever shall think, that pains and sorrows are but delights and recreations: after all the grave dictates of philosophy, pains will be pains; and diseases, diseases, still: and, if reason should presume to teach sense to judge what is pleasant and what is grievous, it would exceed its due bounds, and grow very profoundly ridiculous: it is work enough for patience to bear them as they are; it is not required, that we should account them pleasures and divertisements; and those, who are of such a cynical humour, deserve enough of such blessings. But, though afflictions be in themselves evil, yet are they capable of such excellent improvements, that the good, which shall spring from them, will more than compensate the pain and grief of our present sufferings. To this accords that of the Apostle, Heb. xii. 11. *No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.* As the ploughing up of a field seems utterly to spoil the beauty of it, when its smoothness and verdure are turned into rough and unsightly furrows, and all its herbs and flowers buried under deformed clods of earth; but yet, afterwards, in the days of harvest, when the fields laugh and sing for joy, when the furrows stand thick with corn and look like a boundless sea and inundation of plenty, they yield an incomparable delight to the eyes of the beholders, and welcome sheaves into the bosom of the reapers: so, when God

ploughs up any of his children and makes long furrows upon their backs, it may possibly seem somewhat a strange method of his husbandry, thus to deform the flourishing of their present condition; but yet, afterwards, when the seed, which he casts into these furrows, is sprung up; when it shall overspread their souls, and shake like Lebanon; both the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence will be made apparent, in thus converting a barren prosperity into a more fruitful adversity; and, though they go forth weeping, yet they *shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them*; as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. cxxvi. 6. And, therefore, since afflictions may be thus improved to so great an advantage, impatience and fretfulness under them may be justly censured, not only as impiety, but folly.

Now, there are Four sorts of Improvements and Advantages, that we may make of our afflictions.

(1) As they are the Exercise of our Graces, so they keep them lively and active.

Exercise, you know, though it weary and tire the body for the present, yet conduceth to its health and soundness. Now afflictions are the soul's exercise, by which God keeps our graces in breath, which else would languish and be choked up. And, though this exercise may sometimes be very violent, so as to make the soul pant and run down with sweat; yet this tends to better its constitution, and to remove that sluggish phlegm, which otherwise would obstruct and oppress it. And, therefore, O Christian! whatsoever thy present troubles and afflictions be, know, that God brings them upon thee, only to breathe thy graces, and make them the more healthful and vigorous. Possibly, he takes from thee all thy outward props and dependencies, to try thy Faith; whether it can lean firmly upon a promise, and be confident enough to take his word without a pawn. Possibly, he lets loose all his winds and his waves upon thee: the whole face of heaven may be muffled with clouds; and, for many days, thou mayest see neither sun nor star, no other light but those flashes which are more terrible and dismal than darkness itself; and all this, only to try the temper of thy Hope; whether that anchor be strong enough to hold out in a storm. And, if ever Providence should call thee to lay down thy secular enjoyments, or thy life itself, for the profession of the name of Christ, this is only to try the ardency of thy Love and Zeal, how much thou

canst forego and undergo for his sake; whether thou canst espouse a naked Truth, a destitute and forsaken Christ, when reproaches, revilings, persecutions, and martyrdom, are the only dowry thou canst here expect. Thus, I say, God often brings afflictions upon his people, that their graces may be exercised; and, upon trial, be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, when their faith shall appear victorious, their hope tenacious, and their love sincere, in the midst of troubles, dangers, distresses, yea and death itself. As spices send forth their most fragrant scents, when they are most bruised; so are the graces of God's people more sweet and redolent, when they are crushed and bruised under the pressure of heavy afflictions. Now, as the trial and exercise of our strength is a natural means to encrease it; so, this exercise of grace by afflictions is a proper means to get great strength and perfection of grace: all habits are confirmed in us by frequent acts: and, therefore, O Christian! if thy afflictions put thee upon the acting of faith, and hope, and a generous unbiassed love of God, and self-denial, and humility; know, that thou art a great gainer by thy very losses, and happy in thy greatest troubles. Nay, if by suffering thou only learnest how to suffer, and growest more expert in patience, this alone is a sufficient recompense for all thy sorrows: it will be motive enough to any one, who knows the excellency of this divine grace, to suffer patiently, that he may be patient: see that remarkable place of the Apostle, Rom. v. 3, 4. *We glory in tribulations*: we esteem them our privilege and advantage: why so? because *tribulation worketh patience*: we rejoice to have our patience tried, so long as the product of it is still patience: and *patience worketh experience*: we hereby grow to be experienced Christians; and, by long custom, find, that those troubles are not so dreadful, nor insupportable, when we come to grapple with them, as we thought, when we stood at a distance. Indeed, experience and custom facilitate all things; and make that very easy, which before we accounted difficult, if not impossible. All birds, when they are first caught and put into their cage, fly wildly up and down, and beat themselves against their little prison; but, within two or three days, sit quietly upon their perch, and sing their usual notes, with their usual melody: so it fares with us: when God first brings us into straits, we wildly flutter up and down, and beat and tire ourselves, with striving to get free; but, at length, custom and

experience will make our narrow confinement spacious enough for us; and, though our feet should be in the stocks, yet shall we, with the Apostles, be able, even there, to sing praises to our God. *And experience, saith the Apostle, worketh hope;* inasmuch as having formerly undergone the like afflictions, we may, with the more confidence, expect either the like support, or the like deliverance. *And, lastly, hope maketh not ashamed:* for the expectation of the righteous shall not be disappointed, but God will certainly deliver them, either from or by, all their sufferings and miseries. What a prevalent argument should this be unto patience under afflictions, since a true Christian makes such great improvements of his afflictions, that he would be an infinite loser, should he part with his advantages to be rid of his afflictions! That is the first benefit we gain by afflictions; they exercise and strengthen our graces.

(2) Another advantage of afflictions is this: that they are Physic to the Soul, to expel and purge out its corruptions.

And, therefore, though the potion be bitter; yet, when it is administered to such an end, this should reconcile our antipathy, correct our nauseating, and make us swallow it down without repining or murmuring. See that notable place, Isa. xxvii. 9. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all his fruit, to take away his sin.* And this afflictions do, sometimes, by cutting off those provisions, which a more prosperous condition laid in, for the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh: when we cannot have such large supplies for those vanities and follies, which before too much alienated our hearts from God. Sometimes, they work more kindly and ingenuously, in a moral way; as they put men upon serious reflections, and cause them to consider their ways and doings: those, who were never pensive nor thoughtful before, will be so, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them: then, they begin to examine and ransack their consciences; and, as mariners, in a storm, throw overboard their freight to lighten the vessel; so these, when they are in a tempestuous condition, cast out this and that sin to lighten their souls, that the tempest may the sooner cease, or they the better out-ride it. And this is the very reason, why there is no place so holy as a sick-bed: have you never been conversant with those, who have been cast thereon, when their vessel hath sprung a plank, and death hath been leaking in on every side? have you never observed, how they have then

wholly applied themselves to prayer, and confession, and heavenly discourses? they are deadened to all the joys and vanities of the world; and detest their own folly, for ever loving and prizing them. And so is it, proportionably, in all other afflictions, that God brings upon us: they all tend to make us sober and considerative: for it is a natural impression upon the minds of men, that all our sufferings are for sin: and this cannot but engage us against those sins, the smart of which we so sensibly feel; and, having had such experience of the bitter effects of sin, we are, afterwards, made more capable of the counsel of our Saviour, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us*. Now, O Christian! if this be the fruit of thy afflictions, to purge thee from thy sins, wilt thou complain, that God deals too severely with thee, when he intends thee so great a blessing? canst thou patiently suffer incisions, caustics, searings, amputations, and cutting-off of whole limbs, and all the merciful torture that the art of the physician puts thee to, for the recovery of thy bodily health? and, yet, wilt thou murmur against the Great Physician, when he takes those methods, which, though they are grievous, yet are safest for the cure of thy spiritual diseases, which are infinitely more dangerous and destructive than any corporal maladies can be? certainly, thou either distrustest his skill, or foolishly preferrest thy present ease before thy eternal safety; and wouldst rather go down to hell, having two eyes and two hands, than enter into heaven halt and maimed. Possibly, God sees, that thou hast taken a dangerous surfeit of worldly comforts: and wilt thou vex and fret, that he gives thee a medicine to cast up what thou canst not digest, and to rid thee of what was a load and oppression to thy soul and conscience? Perhaps, he sees thy mind is lifted up, and swells with the tumor of pride and vain-glory, in a continued course of prosperity; and, therefore, the method of his goodness constrains him to lance thee: and wilt thou complain, that he wounds thee, when it is only to let out that purulency and corruption, which else might fester and gangrene, and prove thy utter bane and ruin? Could we but bring our untoward hearts to believe, that all our afflictions are but the prescriptions of our Great Physician; that he designs good to us by them; that, as much of our earthly enjoyments as he takes from us, as much blood as he lets, so much of our corruption and peccant humours run out together with it; common reason would easily persuade us, to bear that with patience, which will so vastly redound to our benefit and advantage.

(3) A patient bearing of afflictions is a clear Evidence of our Adoption.

Indeed, our sufferings only prove us to be the sons of Adam, on whom the curse is entailed through his primitive transgression: but our patience under sufferings, is a strong proof and evidence, that we are the sons of God. All metals may be melted in the furnace; but it is the property of gold only, to endure the fire, and lose nothing of its weight or worth. The Apostle makes this the trial of our legitimation: Heb. xii. 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons:* and, v. 8. *If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons:* and, again, v. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth.* It is true, we cannot argue, that we are the children of God, merely because he scourgeth us; for God dispenseth afflictions, both as he is a Judge and as he is a Father: as he is a Judge, so he deals with wicked and ungodly men, often scourging them with rods, even in this life; and, afterwards, he eternally scourgeth them with scorpions in hell: but, then may we comfortably conclude, that he chasteneth us as a Father, when he gives us patience to bear his rebukes, and works in us a holy submission unto his divine will and pleasure: by this, he doth but set his mark upon thee; and, though it doth burn thee, yet this will be thy perpetual comfort, That, by this, he will own thee, and thou mayest know thyself to be his: so the Apostle tells us, Gal. vi. 17. that he bare in his body *the marks of the Lord Jesus*; that is, all the persecutions and tribulations which he underwent, as they did conform him to a resemblance with the Lord Jesus, so likewise they were so many characters imprinted upon him, declaring to whom he did belong. And now, O Christian! is there any affliction so grievous, as such an evidence is comfortable? will not this abundantly recompense the pain and smart of all thy sufferings, when thy patience in bearing them shall give thee in a testimony that thou art a child of God, and fill thy inward sense as full of joy as thy outward can be of trouble and sorrow; yea, a joy unspeakable and glorious, that shall swallow up all the afflictions which thou feelest, and make them inconsiderable nothings? As St. Stephen was so wholly wrapped up with his heavenly vision, that, though the Jews gnashed upon him with their teeth, and dragged him forth to stone him; yet he was so wholly fixed and intent upon the glory of that unexampled sight, that he regarded not their

threats, nor the stones they threw at him, which, he knew, would but pitch his way to heaven: so, truly, when it pleaseth God to open heaven in a man's soul and to ravish his heart with the dear sense of his eternal love, all outward sorrows and troubles are not of force sufficient to disturb his thoughts; but he is wholly possessed with the consolations of God: he retreats inward, and enjoys himself in peace and unspeakable comfort, in that retirement where afflictions and tribulations cannot reach him; and they can no more embitter his joys, than one drop of gall can embitter the whole sea, when it is let fall into it. Now God never affords such large and overflowing measures of his consolations, as in an afflicted condition: he gives his strongest cordials, when the spirits are most apt to fail and sink. And, therefore, thou, who hast laboured and prayed long for assurance, and wouldest esteem it a felicity next to the possession of heaven to know thy undoubted right unto it, set patience on work in all thy trials and afflictions: bear them quietly and submissively; and see, whether thou canst not read evidences enough for heaven, in the very print of the rod: see, whether God will not this way give thee in so much comfort, as shall turn thy patience into joy and triumph.

(4) Consider, that a patient suffering of afflictions will make rich Additions to the Weight and Splendour of thy Crown of Glory.

And wilt thou then, O Christian! murmur and repine at the weight of thy burden, when, at last, it will be all found to be gems and diadems, and all to be thine own? See what the Apostle saith, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: methinks, this consideration alone should be so effectual to teach us patience, that we should scarce have patience to hear any more: shall our glory superabound, as our sorrows have abounded? shall our eternal refreshings be measured out unto us, by the cup of afflictions which we have here drank of? doth God beat and hammer us, only that he may make us vessels of honour? shall all sighing and sorrow fly away, and everlasting and unmeasurable joy be upon our heads? Wherefore then, O Christian! these impatient complaints, these fretful vexations? dost thou do well to be angry? to fume and estuate, because God takes the course to make thee too glorious? art thou likely to be happier than thou wouldst be? or, doth God do thee an injury, to fit thee for a higher place in heaven, than,

perhaps, thou carest to possess? Believe it, thou art the greatest enemy to thyself: and, if thou wouldst have thy good things here, thou dischargest God from his obligation: thy impatience can free thee from no other weight but one; and that is, the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Thus, therefore, if we consider the great benefits and advantages, that will accrue to us by a patient bearing of afflictions; that it is exercise to our graces, physic for our souls, an evidence of our adoption, and an addition to our future glory; we should soon be convinced, that it is much more our interest to be patient, than it is, not to be afflicted.

That is, therefore, the Fourth Motive.

5. Another motive may be this: that *a patient bearing of afflictions is a very great Honour, both to Ourselves, and to God.*

(1) To Ourselves.

Consult 1 Pet. iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.* It is for the honour of your faith, and hope, and all the rest of your graces, 1 Pet. i. 7. *that the trial of your faith, which is more precious than of gold.....though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory.* There is nothing more honourable than fortitude and magnanimity. Now, it is the heroic gallantry of a Christian spirit, not to be out-baffled by afflictions: but, when his body or estate are broken by them; yet to keep his soul sound and entire, and, in the greatest agonies of sorrows from God, with an undaunted meekness, to say, “Strike, Lord, for thy servant beareth:” and, in the greatest rage of persecutions from men, to scorn their weak attempts, and shew a courage able to endure far more than they are able to inflict. Thus the Primitive Christians tormented their tormentors; and, by their conquering patience, turned their despite against themselves, to gnaw and fret their own bowels.

(2) It brings in a great revenue of glory unto God.

For what can reflect a greater honour upon God, than that, though we suffer from him or for him, yet we can bear it patiently, because it is his hand that inflicts it? Cassian relates a story to this purpose: That a Christian, being injured and tormented by the Heathens and afterwards cast into prison, being asked by one, what miracles Christ had ever wrought, answered him, “The same that you now see, viz. that though I have been

thus ill-handled by you, yet I am not moved with it." When the Devil had obtained of God to afflict Job, who would be sure to do it with all the spite and malice of hell, and yet could not alter the resolution of his patience and constancy; see, how God upbraids the Devil, and glories in his servant's fortitude: Job ii. 3. *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man; one, that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.* God, as it were, pawns and engages his honour upon the patience of his servants: he calls forth his champions to the combat; and sets men and devils against them: if they flinch, his honour suffers for it; but if they keep their ground, and, whatsoever troubles and trials befall them, maintain the temper and constancy of an even sedate soul, this erects a lasting trophy to the glory of God; when they see so much excellency in God and in his ways, that they can prefer piety, with all the afflictions and tribulations that attend it, before the pomp and allurements of this present world, and esteem the very reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. And, therefore, O Christians! if you would glorify God, maintain your spirits in patience under all adversities: for this shews your most high esteem and veneration of him; when you can cleave to him as your chief good, though he bring evil upon you; and resolve to trust in him, though he slay you. This will shame and defeat the Devil; when he sees himself so hated and rejected, though he bring all the baits of pleasure and advantage to recommend his temptations; and God and godliness so esteemed and loved, though they expose their followers to much distress and misery. And, indeed, this way of glorifying God, by patient suffering, is a privilege and advantage, that we have above the angels: the good angels glorify God, by doing his will; but they cannot suffer: and the evil angels, indeed, suffer; but they cannot suffer patiently. Herein we outstrip them: since, by nature, we are made passive; and, by grace, patient.

6. Consider, that *patience under afflictions is the best way to be freed from afflictions.*

And that, whether they be immediately from Men, or from God.

(1) If they be immediately from Men; patience is of such a

sweet winning nature, that, unless they have quite divested humanity, they cannot long persevere in a causeless wronging of those, who quietly bear and pass by their former injuries.

Veterem ferendo injuriam, vites novam, was the old saying * : " By putting up old wrongs, you will not so much invite, as avoid, new ones." *Where no wood is, the fire goeth out*, saith Solomon. Patience subtracts and withdraws fuel from wrath : it finds no new occasion to stir up strife by opposition. Whereas, if there happen a controversy and difference between two impatient men, it is but like clapping the burning ends of two firebrands together : they mutually help to inflame one another, till, it may be, both are consumed : and, while the one doth the wrong and the other retaliates it, they both think they have just cause to keep up an immortal feud. Certainly, nothing sooner damps an injury, than yielding ; as a woolsack will sooner damp and deaden a bullet, than a stone-wall. Resistance gives, if not a right, yet a pretence and colour to farther injuries : for those, who did the first, will think themselves as much affronted by our revenge, as we did by the first wrong ; and so both are mutually exasperated, and there can be no end of violence and outrage. Whereas, a patient, meek-spirited man, who passeth by many provocations that are given him, presently cuts off the long genealogy and succession of wrongs ; and finds it much easier to endure some without revenge, than to draw upon himself a great many by revenging them. This sweet temper of spirit, which the Gospel so highly recommends, must needs, at length, win upon our adversaries to forbear their unjust prosecutions ; and to cease harming us, when they see us innocent, and followers of that which is good : this effect it will have upon them, if they be not altogether fierce and brutish ; or, if they be, it will prevail with God to restrain their malice, and to take us, as his clients, under his own protection.

(2) If our sufferings be immediately from God, a patient bearing of them will the sooner put a period to them ; because, usually, one great end why God doth afflict us, is to teach us patience.

And, therefore, the sooner we learn this hard lesson, the sooner we make the affliction needless ; and God will not chastise any, unless need be. His design is not to break, but only to bow and humble thee : and, when he hath effected this, he

* Publius apud Gellium Noct. Attic. l. xvii. c. 14.

will soon withdraw his chastisements, and cast away his rod; it being a work altogether as displeasing and irksome to him, as it can be unto thee. Rev. iii. 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience: i. e. because thou hast been patient according to my word, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* Now, when you are under afflictions, what is it that you most passionately desire? is it not, that God would take off his hand? that he would spare a little, and give some respite? that he would free you from your sorrows and sufferings? Believe it, the most infallible and compendious method to obtain this, is, to bear the indignation of the Lord with a submissive patience; for then, commonly, the affliction is no longer useful, as having obtained its end: but, while thou frettest and ragest against God's dispensations, know, that it is not for his honour to let thee go out of his hands; for such a temper will never be brought to acknowledge him in the deliverance, which will not submit to him in the affliction.

7. Consider, that *all thy sufferings in this life are, in themselves, tolerable.*

They are but the infirmities of a man, which the spirit of a man may bear. For,

(1) They are only Partial.

Thou art afflicted only in some few of thy concerns: never was any, in all: and yet all are alike subject to the same God, and to the same Providence. And, what! wilt thou murmur and repine, when thou sufferest only in one or two interests, when all the rest escape; whereas, thou mightest have suffered universally in every faculty of thy soul, and every member of thy body, and every thing that belongs unto thee?

(2) All thy afflictions and sufferings have a great mixture of Mercy in them.

There is no one of us, but, if impatience did not blind him, might see much more cause of thankfulness in every estate, than of fretting and repining. The truth is, when we are under any affliction, we are generally troubled with a malicious kind of melancholy: we only dwell and pore upon the sad and dark occurrences of Providence; but never take notice of the more benign and bright ones. Our way, in this world, is like a walk under a row of trees, checkered with light and shade: and, because we cannot all along walk in the sunshine, we therefore perversely fix only upon the darker passages, and so lose all

the comfort of our comforts. We are like froward children, who, if you take but one of their playthings from them, throw away all the rest in spite. Now, O Christian! recollect thyself: consider how many mercies thou enjoyest with thy afflictions: yea, consider how much mercy is in thy afflictions; in that they are not so extreme and rigorous, as thy sins deserved, and could have prepared: they are such, as might easily enough be borne, didst not thou thyself greaten and aggravate them, by thy impatience. The truth is, men dress up their afflictions in a black, hideous shape; and then are frightened at what they themselves have made so formidable. For shame, then, never whine nor complain at God's dealings with thee; lest God, to punish thee for thy impatience and murmuring, under more gentle and easy afflictions, prepare such for thee, whose little finger shall be heavier than their loins; and whereas, before, he chastised thee with rods, henceforth he chastise thee with scorpions.

8. Consider *how many thousands, in the world, are in a far worse condition than yourselves; and would account themselves happy, were they in your circumstances.*

And how unreasonable, then, is it, to complain of God's dispensations! Do we think, that God is more indebted unto us, than he is to them? or, that he wrongs us, if he doth not bestow more upon us, than upon all the world beside? Thou art, possibly, impatient at the loss of a child, or of some near relation: but, how many are there in the world, to whom these are given, as the greatest crosses and burdens of their lives! Thou liest, perhaps, under racking and tormenting pains, or languishest under lingering and consuming diseases, and frettest thyself with impatience! though, possibly, thou mayest have all accommodations of means and attendance to ease and solace thee: but, canst thou find none that suffer the same pains, the same diseases, and, it may be, in a far more sharp and severe measure, and yet are destitute of all the other comforts thou enjoyest; and have no where to breathe out their sighs and their sorrows, but in the open air, or at the threshold of thy door? Certainly, were all the evils and miseries, that mankind endure, amassed together, and brought into one common stock and store, and then distributed by equal shares among all men, thy lot and thy portion of them would, perhaps, be much greater than now it is: and, therefore, it is very unjust and unreasonable for thee to complain, since God hath been more kind and more favourable to thee, than to thousands of others. But, the mi-

every is, that pride and self-love make us always take our measures from those that are above us : and, if we see any more prosperous than ourselves, we presently murmur and quarrel at God's proceedings ; and are apt to think that he deals rigidly with us, because he deals more favourably with some : whereas, were we humble enough to look below ourselves, we should, every where, find miserable objects ; and see abundant cause to bless and praise God, that it is not with us, as with them. Art thou Poor ? yet, even among that rank of men, are there none reduced to a more pinching and tyrannous necessity, than thyself ? look about thee in the world ; and, I believe, there are few or none, that will read this, but may find some whom they can relieve, and are fit objects of their pity and charity. Art thou Diseased, or tormented with Pains ? but canst thou find no Lazarus, no Job, in the world, in comparison with whom, thy diseases themselves are health, and thy pains pleasure ? thou art not yet brought into that extremity, that a potsherd or a dog's tongue should be thy only ease and comfort. Hast thou sustained Losses in thy estate, or in thy relations ? but canst thou find none, who can make thee such doleful complaints, and tell thee such sad stories of these things, as to make thee forget thine own sorrows, and mingle thy tears, not of impatience, but compassion, with theirs ? Certainly, we have all of us abundant cause to be thankful to God, that we are not the most forlorn and wretched creatures in the world : for that very sovereignty and dominion of his, which hath made others so, might have allotted us the same portion. And, yet, these miserable creatures themselves have no reason for impatience, upon many accounts and considerations before mentioned ; and how much less hast thou, whom, perhaps, they envy as happy and prosperous, whilst thou art still complaining, that thy condition is wretched and deplorable !

9. As another motive to patience, consider of *how short duration and continuance all the troubles and afflictions of this life are.*

Though your way be thorny and miry, yet it is but short. A few sighs more may bring you to heaven, where all sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and everlasting joy succeed these temporal miseries. Long afflictions are not beyond our sufferance. They must of necessity be light burdens, that a man carries far. Sore and heavy troubles usually give in bail to their own arrest : they spend, together with the subject that beareth them ; and must, like fire, go out at last, for want of fuel. So that what-

sover your afflictions are, yet still, in the very nature of them, you may find ground enough for patience: if they be light and ordinary, it is but effeminacy and a weakness of spirit, to complain of what you may well support: if they be grievous and intolerable, a little time will serve to deliver you from the sense of them: and, as Antoninus said well *, ΑΦΟΡΗΤΟΝ ΕΞΑΓΕΙ, ΧΡΟΝΙΖΟΝ ΦΟΡΗΤΟΝ. "That, which is intolerable, is not durable: that, which is lingering, is not intolerable:" thou mayest easily bear the one; and the other will soon wear out thee. And, what! cannot thy patience stand out one hard brunt; and endure a short shock, though it be fierce and violent? It is but a storm, that will quickly blow over: and thou mayest live to see serene and bright days again; if not in this world, yet then, when thou shalt be got above these clouds and this region of tempests, into that mansion of bliss and joy, where never sorrows nor sufferings durst appear. Indeed, impatience is a great prolonger of torment: it is not our pain, but our impatience, that makes the time seem long and tedious to us: both sense and reason tell us, that the sun riseth over a sick man's bed as over the healthy and vigorous, and that the hours roll away as fast over the miserable as the prosperous; yet, how swift are our days spent in ease and pleasure! the hours seem to overtake, and to crowd one into another. And yet, certainly, thy sad and thy cheerful days have both one and the same measure: the shadow creeps as fast about the dial of a miserable man, as of the happy. The odds lies only within thyself. Impatience, fretfulness, repining, a raw and eager spirit, fond hopes and impotent desires, make short afflictions seem long, and long ones endless. But, were these cured, thou wouldst find it altogether unreasonable to complain of the length of thy afflictions; when yet they are whirled away and pass with the same fleetness, which makes others complain that their pleasures and their lives are too short.

However, here consider,

(1) Let thy afflictions be as grievous as thy passion can describe them, yet doth God afford thee no lucid intervals? Hast thou no intermission from thy sorrows? no breathing-space afforded thee?

This is mercy: and this time of thy ease and refreshment ought not to be reckoned into the suffering; as, commonly, it is. Indeed, men have got an art of making their sorrows longer

* Antonin. de Seipso. l. vii. §. 23.

than they are: ask one, who labours under a chronical distemper, how long he hath been troubled with it: straight he will tell you, for so many months, or for so many years: when yet, perhaps, the greater part of that time he enjoyed ease and freedom, between the returning periods of his disease. Certainly, the affliction can be no longer than it lies upon thee; and that, usually, is but a very inconsiderable time, compared to that, wherein God relieves and comforts thee. Job complains, that God brought his sorrows so thick and fast upon him, that *he would not suffer him to take his breath*: Job ix. 18: he was like a man shipwrecked in a tempest, where the surges and billows broke so fast upon him, that he had not time so much as to lift his head above water to take breath. But hath God dealt so with thee? hast thou not had a morning, as well as an evening, to make up thy day? Though the clouds return again after the rain, and the same pain or disease, or whatsoever affliction it be, recurs; yet, it is mercy, that God hath interrupted the course of it; that he hath given thee an *interstitium* of ease: and, then, thou canst no more, with truth, say, that thou hast so long had thy disease, than that thou hast had thy health. And,

(2) If thou hast been long under afflictions, yet, perhaps, they have been varied.

Even this is mercy, that he will not strike long upon one place, nor scourge thee where thou art sore already. But, suppose,

(3) The affliction, that God brings upon thee, were to continue as long as thy life itself continues, without either change or intermission; yet consider, that it is most unreasonable to complain of thy sorrows, as long, when thou art still complaining of thy life, as short.

If thou art not relieved sooner, yet it cannot be long ere death will put an end to thy temporal miseries; and the last sigh and groan thou shalt give, will be that, which shall discharge thy soul from thy body, and thee from all thy present sorrows and sufferings. And, therefore, though the days of thy pilgrimage be evil, yet, since they are but few, this may recompense for the other, and persuade thee to bear patiently, what thou art not to bear long. Think with thyself, “It is but a few days or a few years more, that I shall be in a suffering, in an afflicted condition. I am travelling through a vale of miseries, but my grave is within view: there I shall throw down all

this load of care and trouble; and sweetly take a profound rest, where none of the vexations of this life shall ever disturb me: *There the weary be at rest*: and, what! shall I faint under my burdens, when I am to bear them but so short a time? Take courage, O soul! that happy hour is hastening on, as fast as the wings of time can speed it, which shall give ease to thy pain, and rest to thy weariness. Death will shortly come in to thy relief, take off thy load, and lay thee to sleep in thy grave." But,

(4) All our troubles and afflictions are infinitely short, and nothing, in comparison with eternity.

If, at any time, the greatness, and soreness, and long continuance of them tempt thee to impatience, cast but thine eye upon eternity, and they will all so shrink and vanish under that comparison, that they will scarce deserve the name of afflictions. This great ball of earth on which we live, if we consider it in its own dimensions, how huge a mass and globe is it! but, yet, if compared to the vast expansion of the heavens, it is but a small, invisible point; and bears no more proportion to it, than one poor drop of water to the whole ocean. And, so, take all the long flux of time, from the creation of the world to this present moment, and we reckon it by hundreds and thousands of years: it seems to us a mighty while: but, then, lay all this time, which is stretched out thus long, lay it to eternity, and it presently shrinks up to nothing: it is lost and swallowed up in that bottomless gulf. Yea, the smallest drop of water is infinitely more considerable to the great ocean, than thousands of years, though they should be multiplied again by thousands of thousands, are to an eternal duration.

Thou, therefore, who complainest of thy long and endless troubles, consider,

[1] That these take up but a very small and inconsiderable part of thy life.

Most of thy days have been crowned with mercy, and God's candle hath shone upon thy tabernacle almost as often as the sun.

[2] Consider, that thy life takes up but a very small and inconsiderable part of time.

It is but like a little pattern cut thee off from the great piece. And,

[3] Consider also, that time itself, though it should be

stretched out to as many ages as there have been minutes in it, yet bears no proportion to eternity.

And art thou not ashamed, then, to complain of the length and continuance of thy afflictions, since they are as nothing, in comparison with the rest of thy life ; and thy life itself nothing, in comparison with the rest of time ; and time itself nothing, in comparison with eternity ? And, certainly, could our meditations dwell more upon that eternal state that awaits us, either of joy unspeakable or of unsufferable woe and torments, the consideration of this would enable us to bear our present short afflictions with a heroic and generous patience ; and we should scorn to think them either long or grievous. For,

1st. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider the bitter and the eternal torments, that thousands of wretched creatures suffer in hell ?

Look but into that great Shop of Woe : observe all the instruments and engines of torture that are there prepared, which God will use against them with his greatest skill and his almighty power : *Their worm never dies, and their fire never goeth out* : they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their furnace ascends up for ever and ever : and, when they have felt more exquisite and racking tortures than you can now fancy, for millions of millions of years, yet still it is but the beginning of their sorrows ; still it is as far to the bottom of eternity, as it was the very first moment. These, indeed, are sufferings that might well make a man impatient : but, for you to vex, and fret, and be impatient, whose sufferings are but for a few days or hours, who have so many mercies and comforts mingled with all your afflictions, it shews a weak, sordid, low spirit : for you to be impatient under those little crosses that God lays upon you here, whereas he might righteously have plunged you into hell, and there have given you cause indeed to roar, and howl, and toss in eternal flames and never-ceasing woes, it argues a base, disingenuous, and ungrateful spirit. And,

2dly. What is it for us to suffer a few short days, when we consider that everlasting bliss and joy, which is prepared for us in heaven ?

The happiness of heaven may well comfort us, in respect of all our miseries here upon earth. What saith the Apostle, Rom. viii. 18 ? *I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Christians ! think but seriously with yourselves,

that, though your way be rugged and tiresome, yet it is a way that leads unto your Father's house: and, though you come there all wet and weary, wet with your tears and wearied with your burdens; yet there you shall be surely welcome, and enjoy an eternity of rest: there, you shall sit down; and, with everlasting joy, recount to your brethren, a whole ring of surrounding saints, all the wonderful methods of Divine Providence, which brought you thither; and, with infinite satisfaction, see the necessity and mercy of those afflictions, which you have here endured: there, your garments of heaviness shall be changed into garments of praise, and your crown of thorns into a crown of glory: there, you shall for ever rest your tired souls in the bosom of Jesus Christ; and for ever enjoy so great a felicity, that it were infinitely worth suffering all the miseries and afflictions which this life can bear, to have but one momentary taste and relish of it. Didst thou know what the glory of heaven is, thou wouldst be content to lie upon the rack, to endure the sharpest paroxysms of the most torturing and cruel pains all thy life long, and account them easy and short, if these could purchase for thee one hour's enjoyment of the ineffable glory and happiness of heaven. And, wilt thou then be fretful and impatient under thy present sufferings, when these are prepared to be the inlet into thy eternal reward? when thou shalt be for ever confirmed in the possession of all good? when thou shalt never more be in a possibility of suffering; nor know, what a sad thought, or a sad moment, means? And, canst thou think any affliction long, when thou thus reflectest upon the everlasting recompence that shall be made thee? Certainly, did we more dwell upon the thoughts and meditations of eternity, we should not be so irrational, as to judge that long, which takes up but a very little part of that time, which, of itself, is nothing, compared to an eternal duration.

(5) Consider, again, what brief measures the Scripture gives us, of our temporal afflictions.

It is called a Season: 1 Pet. i. 6. *Now, for a Season, if need be, ye are in heaviness*: and seasons, you know, are of no long continuance, but have their periods and revolutions. Yea, to cut it shorter yet, the Scripture calls it a Day of Adversity: Prov. xxiv. 10. *If thou faint in the Day of Adversity, thy strength is small*: small, indeed, if it cannot weather out one bad day! and so, likewise, a Night of Weeping: Ps. xxx. 5.

Weeping may endure for a Night, but joy cometh in the morning. Nay, if this yet seem too long to our impatient and fretful spirits, the Scripture still shortens it, and calls it but the Hour of Temptation: Rev. iii. 10. *I will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation:* and, shall not our patience be able to endure an hour's affliction? Or, would you desire it shorter yet? see it then contracted into a moment: 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Our light affliction, which is but for a Moment:* and what is a moment, but an indivisible point of time, that hath no parts nor succession in it; a mere twinkle of time? Innumerable of them are gone, while we are speaking the word, Moment. And, yet, all these afflictions, which thou so grievously complaineest of, are light for their burden, and momentary for their duration, if that can be called a duration: These *light afflictions, which are but for a moment.* As one of the martyrs said, "It is but winking, and I shall be in heaven:" so, truly, these short afflictions are past and gone in the cast, in the twinkling of an eye. Let us, then, be persuaded to bear them with patience. It is much below the spirit of a man, to murmur and complain of that, which a little time will ease him of; and much more, of a Christian. If thou canst not bear a season, a day, or night of affliction, an hour, a moment of affliction; wherefore art thou a Christian? Hast thou hope only in this life? if so, reckon thyself among the number of those, whose portion is only in this life: but, if thou wilt own the name of a Christian, thou oughtest to enlarge thyself infinitely beyond this present time: thou oughtest to take eternity into thy life; and not to account that thy life, which thou ledest here upon earth; but that, which thou livest by faith, and expectest with a cheerful hope, the everlasting life of glory and happiness in heaven. And, what is it to this life of thine, what thou sufferest here? do poverty, disgrace, pains, and diseases, losses, and crosses; do these reach into eternity? or, do they at all taint that better life, which thou livest? This here is not thy life. As we reckon not the age of children, from the time they have been conceived in the womb, but from the time of their birth: so, truly, this present life is but the conception of a Christian: in this world, we are but in the womb: then we begin to live, when we are brought forth into the clear light of heaven, and breathe the air of eternity: and, therefore, the days, on which martyrs suffered, were called their *Natalitia*. And, if any sorrows and afflictions could

reach thither, thou hadst some reason to be impatient: but none at all, for these transitory troubles, which quickly pass away with our days; and for which, thou wilt in heaven be no more concerned, than now thou art, for the pains and inconveniences which thou feltest in the womb, before thou wert born.

That is a Ninth Motive to Patience: the consideration of the Short Continuance of all the Afflictions of this Life.

10. The tenth and last motive to patience, which ought to be very effectual with all true Christians, shall be taken from *the Example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

The Apostle commands us, Heb. xii. 2, 3, 4. to *look unto Jesus*; and to *consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied, and faint in our minds*: and, again, 1 Pet. ii. 21. we are told, that *Christ suffered for us; leaving us an example, that we should follow the steps of his patience and submission*. And, certainly, he is so great an example of patience, that, when we consider the indignities which he endured, and the infinite meekness with which he bore them, it may well shame us out of our fretfulness and impatience.

And there be Two considerations, which do mightily enhance this, and tend to make it a most prevalent and effectual motive to arm us with meekness and patience.

(1) Consider, that his sufferings were infinitely greater, than any that we can possibly undergo.

From his cratch to his cross, we find his way strewn all along with miseries. Born of a poor and suspected mother; acquainted with all the hardships of a mean and laborious life; his doctrine reproached to be blasphemy, and his miracles to be sorcery; having no shelter, no sustenance, not so much as the little conveniences of birds and foxes: he conflicts with his Father's wrath, till it strained his soul into an agony; and the apprehensions of that bitter cup, presented to him, squeezed drops of clotted blood from him. We see him exposed to the insulting scoffs of barbarous ruffians; crowned with thorns, scourged, buffeted, and spit upon; and, by the drops of his blood, we may trace him to his cross: see him hanging there, a ruthless spectacle both to men and angels; the greatest scene of dolours and miseries, that ever was represented to the world. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* And,

(2) Consider, that all his unknown sufferings were not for his own, but for our offences.

It is some motive to patience, when we suffer the effects of our own deserts. So thought the Penitent Thief, when he checked the blasphemous reproaches of his fellow-offender: Luke xxiii, 40. *Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.* There was no iniquity in him, neither was guile found in his mouth: yet, notwithstanding his infinite purity and innocence, notwithstanding that all his actions were pleasing to God and beneficial to man; yet, he suffers all the wrath that the one, and indignities that the other, could load him with. And, what! do we find his passions estuate? doth he murmur against God, or meditate revenge against men? No; we find him meekly resigning up his will to his Father's: Not mine, but thy will be done: and, under all the rage and affronts of men, he pours out his prayer, together with his blood, for them: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Now, O Christians! imitate this pattern of your Blessed Saviour: let it powerfully persuade you to patience and submission, under all your sufferings. Ours are all but the least desert of our own sins: his were only the desert of ours. Ours are only some sprinklings of that cup, the very bottom and dregs of which he drank off: and shall we be any longer impatient against God, or revengeful against men? shall we fret, and fume, and be exasperated, and fly out into all the extremities of passion and violence, when our Lord Christ himself, the infinitely holy and glorious God, calmly endured such pains, such shame, such wrath, that the very utmost we can suffer in this life is scarce a fit shadow and resemblance of them?

And thus we see this exhortation of the Apostle pressed upon us, by these Ten Motives; which if we would bring under the view of our serious consideration, we shall find enough in them, to incline the most peevish and fretful nature to a meek and quiet submission to the hand and will of God. For, it is a most Necessary Grace for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, which is full of troubles and afflictions; and nothing can so alleviate them, as patience: the Author and Inflicter of all thy sufferings is God, who is absolute in his sovereignty; our Proprietor, as our Lord; infinitely gracious and merciful, as our

Father; infinitely faithful to his word, whereby he hath promised; and infinitely wise and skilful, whereby he is able to work all things for our good and benefit: again, if we consider what we have Deserved, this will prevail with us patiently to bear what we feel: and consider the great Benefits and Advantages, that accrue to us by afflictions; as they are exercise to our graces, physic to our souls, evidences of our adoption, and additions to our future glory: consider, again, the patient bearing of afflictions is a very great Honour, both to Ourselves and to God: it is, likewise, the best and readiest Way to be Freed from afflictions: that no affliction befalls us, but what is Tolerable, and common to men; how many in the world are in a far Worse Condition than ourselves; and that all our afflictions are but Short and Momentary: and, lastly, consider the Pattern and Example of Christ's Patience, which will powerfully sway us to patience under those sorrows we suffer, which are both less in themselves and more deserved by us.

Thus I have given the Motives to Patience.

ii. The next thing, in order, is, to shew those Distempers of Spirit which are great HINDRANCES of Patience; and give a very great advantage to every cross and trouble, to ruffle and discompose it. And, with these, I shall also annex and prescribe the CURES.

And they are such as these.

1. *An effeminate Softness and Delicacy of Spirit; when the mind is lax and fluid, and hath not its due consistency.*

We may observe some persons to be of such a nice complexion, that every alteration injures them: let them but change their diet, or air, or set and accustomed hours, and they suffer grand inconvenience by it: whereas, others, that are more robust and vigorous, undergo these and greater changes, without change. And the like difference there is in the constitution of men's souls, as in their bodies: some are of such feeble and languishing spirits, that they are utterly disordered by those accidents, which scarce move those that are of a more hardy temper. And these are, usually, men of very prone passions and affections, easily excited and set on work by every thing that occurs: so that it is a wonder to see, how they are agitated by every small and trivial object which presents itself; like chaff or straw, that the least breath of wind whirls about: sometimes, they immoderately rejoice; sometimes, they tenderly commiserate;

sometimes, they vex, and rage, and fly out into all extremities of choler, at those petty circumstances that would not stir another, of a solid and masculine spirit. But these are men of too soft and tender a constitution. And, as a light stroke makes a deep wound upon a soft subject; so every light affliction enters deep, and cuts these men's souls to the very quick.

Now, to these let me recommend that admirable exhortation of the Wise Man, Prov. iii. 11. and urged by the Apostle, Heb. xii. 5. *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* Here we have a most excellent temper set forth to us; as a mean, between stupidity and desponding impatience. We ought to be affected with the hand of God; and not to demean ourselves under afflictions, as though we felt no smart, neither valued what God doth against us, but rather defied him to do his worst. It is a sign of desperate incorrigibleness, when we are grown to a dedolency; and are so far past feeling, as to despise the smart and correction of the rod. Moderate passions are allowed us; and God, when he afflicts us, would have us shew ourselves to be men; not such brutish Leviathans, as to laugh at the shaking of his spear, and to account his darts and arrows no more formidable than stubble*. But then again, on the other hand, beware, that, as thou dost not despise, so thou dost not despond under the corrections of thy Heavenly Father. Fortify thy spirit, and arm it with all the arguments that are proper to encourage thee, in a suffering condition. Do not permit it to grow too tender; and, instead of being sensible, to be sore and fretful.

Consider,

(1) The Indecency and Unbecomingness of Impatience.

It sits ill upon a man, and renders him contemptible and ridiculous. We do never so much unman ourselves, as by peevishness and fretful humours. We degrade ourselves in the esteem of others, as a company of weak things, who must, like children, be humoured, to keep them quiet. Impatience always proceeds from weakness: and, while we toss, and tumultuate, and express the eagerness of an ulcerated mind, in all the intemperate language and actions that passion suggests, we are but a

* *Non sentire mala sua, non est hominis; et non ferre, non est viri.* Seneca. Consol. ad Polyb. cap. 36.

“It is inhuman, not to feel our sufferings; and unmanly, not to bear them.”

grief to some, a sport to others, and fall under the scorn and contempt of all. Let us think with ourselves, how unseemly is the wild and extravagant fury of a distracted person! why, an impatient man is distracted; and, like such, he flings abroad, at random, firebrands, arrows, and death. And, therefore, our Saviour Christ exhorts us, Luke xxi. 19. *In your patience, possess ye your souls*; intimating to us, that an impatient person hath lost the possession of himself: he is a man bereft of his reason; and, as we use to say, besides himself.

(2) Consider the Vanity and Folly of Impatience.

To what purpose is it, that thou vexest and torturest thyself? Couldst thou ease or relieve thyself by it, this might be some plea and reasonable pretence. But, was it ever heard, that the body was cured of a fever, by putting the soul into one? was it ever heard, that the disordering of the mind composed a man's estate? or, that raising a tempest within, should lay a tempest without? Nay, rather, impatience adds a mighty weight to our burdens, while we must bear both them and it too.

(3) Consider, that Impatience is not only unseemly and foolish, but it is Unchristian too.

There is nothing more directly contrary to the true spirit and genius of Christianity, than murmuring and repining: for, what is Religion, what is Christianity, but only a due resignation of our wills unto the sovereign and holy will of God? now, for us to vex and fret at the accomplishment of his will and purposes upon us, what is this else, but so far to renounce Christianity, to rebel against God, and to withdraw ourselves from under his dominion and jurisdiction? And, therefore, I beseech you, O Christians! as you would approve yourselves to be such, that you would earnestly strive against that fond niceness and delicacy of spirit, which will, else, be a great snare unto you, and tempt you to usurp upon God's prerogative, and wickedly to invade his government: for, whosoever is not content with what God allots him, would willingly ravish from him his power and sovereignty, and set himself in the throne: he doth but tacitly upbraid God, that he wants either wisdom, or goodness, or both. And, therefore, confirm and harden your minds against all adversities that may befall you: fix your resolutions, that thus it ought to be, and that thus it is best for you: and, whatsoever portion God carves out to you, receive it with thankfulness: if it be prosperous, as your food; if adverse, as your physic.

2. Another great hindrance of patience, is *a fond Love and Admiration of these Creature-Enjoyments.*

Indeed, were these things certain and durable, they would only be perpetual comforts to us: but we see, by every day's experience, that they are transitory, and mutable, and of no continuance: and, therefore, when we eagerly set our hearts and affections upon them, to be sure, we shall, either in the loss of our enjoyments or the disappointment of our hopes, find cause enough for grief, and temptations enough to impatience. Let the comforts we prize thus immoderately, be what they will, we shall find it a very difficult labour to keep ourselves from murmuring against God, when he is pleased to cross us in them: for all the passions of the soul take their measures from love: that is the master and leading affection: and, therefore, according to the intenseness of your love, such will be your sorrow, and your anger, and the fretfulness of a discontented soul, when God takes away the object of your fond love from you. So it is said of Jonah, chap. iv. 6. that he *was exceeding glad of the gourd*: he mightily pleased himself in the shade and the shelter, that it afforded him: and, therefore, when God had prepared a worm to smite and wither it, you presently see what a violent and exorbitant passion he falls into: and, when God graciously condescended to expostulate with him, "*Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?*" is this fit for thy reason, or religion, or profession, to be so transported for the fading of so small a thing, as this gourd, the mean offspring of the earth?" we see, that discontent and passion so blinded him, that he flies in the very face of God himself, and gives the Almighty the most saucy peremptory answer, that certainly ever proceeded out of the mouth of a good man: v. 9. he said, *I do well to be angry, even unto death*: alas, peevish man! that so little a matter, as the withering of a poor shrub or weed, should put him into so violent a passion! But, so it is, when we immoderately prize the enjoyment of any comfort on earth, we shall likewise immoderately bear the loss of it: when God comes to touch us there, all within us is presently in an uproar; we estuate, and fume, and exclaim against men, and quarrel at Providence; accuse one, and revenge ourselves upon another; and, in the turbulency of our passion, can scarce abstain from God himself.

Now, to cure and remove this cause of impatience, let me beseech you to sit loose from the things of this world. Let

them not congregate with your hearts; for, believe it, if once the soul and affections be glued to these earthly concernments, whenever God shall take them from you, it will be a violent tearing and rending of your very hearts, to part with them. Bring yourselves into a holy indifferency of all things here below; and, then, whatsoever happens, nothing can fall out much amiss. If you have no vehement affections for the enjoyment of these things, you will have no violent passions stirring in you for their loss. If thou didst truly estimate what this world is, how vain, how empty and insignificant, how vexatious and cumbersome, thou wouldst find abundant reason to conclude, that it is not much material, whether thou be high or low, rich or poor, persecuted or favoured, despised or honoured: for, all these things are but dreams; and, as dreams, they vanish and pass away. Our true interest lies not here, but in peace of conscience, serenity of mind, staid and sedate affections, a generous virtue, and a pious life; and if these were thy care, crosses and afflictions would be less thy troubles. Think with thyself, how momentary thy life is: thou wert but of yesterday, and mayst not be to-morrow: when it is stretched out to the uttermost, it is but a span long: and what needst thou, then, trouble and perplex thyself about so many concernments and such a multitude of affairs, and engage all the strength and vigour of thy affections about such vain things, that continue not, nor canst thou continue to use them? What need so much provision for so short a journey? Let us take the Apostle's direction, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *The time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none; And they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as those that purchased not; And they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.* And, certainly, could we but bring ourselves to this excellent indifferency, we should not be much molested, nor grow fretful and impatient, for any losses or disappointments in things which we look upon as of no great concernment.

3. Another great hindrance to patience, is *Pride and Self-Love.*

For, while we are fond of ourselves, we shall be shrewdly tempted to murmur at whatsoever crosses and thwarts our appetites or our interests. Those, that are great admirers of themselves, think that all things are due to them: and, if any

thing fall out contrary to their expectations and overweening conceits, they presently judge themselves wronged; and storm and rage, as if their bitterest passions were but just resentments of the injury done them. Never was there a proud person in the world, but he was also impatient: for it is the very nature of pride, not to endure to be crossed; and those, who are inordinate lovers and admirers of themselves, must needs take it for a mighty injury, if all things go not according to their mind and will.

And there is a Twofold Pride, which is the cause and root of all our impatience: a Natural and a Spiritual Pride.

(1) A Natural Pride.

When we think ourselves eminent for some natural gifts and endowments; and, thereupon, expect, that all others should say as we say, and do as we would have them: and, if any presume to do otherwise, we look upon ourselves as affronted, and cannot bear such a contumely; but presently burn in choler, and seek to wreak our revenge and spleen upon them. A proud man is his own idol, and his own idolater: and, as Nebuchadnezzar grew wroth and furious, hot as his fiery furnace seven times heated, when the three heroes refused to fall down and worship the image which he had set up; so these proud persons grow presently enraged, if all do not bow and fall down before them. If they meet with any so stubborn, as to thwart and oppose them, presently their Diana is despised; and all their passions are in an uproar and a tumult, to vindicate their honour. *Only from pride, saith the Wise Man, cometh contention: Prov. xiii. 10.* and wherever contention is found, impatience is first the mother of it.

(2) There is a Spiritual Pride, which is the root of impatience.

And this spiritual pride may be, where yet there is a great deal of natural modesty and weakness. Now, this pride consists in having an unbroken and unhumiliated heart for sin; when we have never been deeply affected with our guilt and vileness, and that most wretched and deplorable condition in which we all are. And, therefore, whensoever God afflicts such a proud person as this, he is apt to think himself punished beyond his desert; and to question and quarrel at the equity and justice of God, in bringing such heavy and sore sufferings upon him, who thinks himself a very innocent and righteous person. And this spiritual haughtiness and pride makes him fret against God's dispensa-

tions; and makes him think that God himself turns persecutor, when he afflicts him.

Thus you see, that all our Impatience is from Pride; whether our sufferings be immediately from man, or from God himself: for, proud flesh is very tender, and cannot endure the least touch.

Now, the only Cure for this distemper of soul, is Self-Denial and Humility. That man is most secure from impatience, who entertains but mean and low thoughts of himself: for, what strong temptation can there be to any great excess of impatience, so long as we suffer only in that, which we do not highly value? Why should I vex or fret myself, that such a man speaks ill of me? alas! he speaks not worse of me, than I speak and think of myself: shall I be discomposed, because he hath done me such an injury? why I shall but gratify him by that means; and, perhaps, he did it with that very design: and, besides, he hath far more injured himself than me, so long as I can keep my patience entire. Or, shall I murmur and repine, because God hath brought upon me such a calamity? alas! this is a favour and mercy, in respect of what I have deserved at his hands: when I consider, what I have done against him, all that he hath done against me is nothing: my sins merit no less than eternal death and eternal damnation; and, certainly, I have no reason to complain, so long as I am out of hell: God were infinitely gracious and merciful to me, though he should redouble his strokes, multiply my sorrows, and increase my sufferings; and I were the most ungrateful wretch alive, if I should repine at bearing so little, when I have deserved so much. Thus, I say, humility, a contrite and broken frame of spirit, will preserve us from being fretful and impatient, whether we lie under injuries from men, or afflictions from God.

4. *Reflecting too much upon the Instruments of our Sufferings*, is oftentimes a mighty hindrance to the composure and patience of our spirits.

For this frequently puts a sting and aggravation into them, to think, that we suffer from such or such. And many will be ready to say, "This cross I could bear well enough: the affliction, though it be in itself heavy, yet is it supportable: but, when I consider the occasion of my sufferings, the unworthiness and base disingenuity of those that have had a hand in it, this makes it intolerable; and, it wounds me to the very heart, that ever such and such a person should deal thus with me."

(1) And there are usually these Three Considerations, that grate upon our spirits, and make us impatient under sufferings.

[1] The Meanness and contemptible Vileness of the Instrument.

What! to be affronted and abused by the lees and dregs of the people! If a lion had rent me, there had been some solace in the honour of my sufferings: but, to be eaten up with vermin, the ignominy of it is far worse than the pains. Thus, I say, impatience takes occasion to exasperate itself from the baseness of the instrument. And, truly, the most patient have much ado to keep their passions from souring upon this reflection. Thus, Job at large aggravates his miseries, from this consideration: Job. xxx. 1, 8, 9: *They, that are younger than I, have me in derision: whose fathers I would have disdained to...set with the dogs of my flock....They were children of fools; yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song; and their by-word.* And,

[2] It heightens impatience, when we reflect upon the Nearness of those, who are the occasions and instruments of our sufferings.

What! to have a part of ourselves, a parcel of our own bowels, rebel against us, and contrive our hurt and ruin! those, who have their beings from us, to conspire our destruction! or those, whom we have made intimate and familiar with us; and could never have had the advantage of doing us mischief, had not our friendship and kindness put them into the capacity! And, thus, David aggravates his sufferings: Ps. lv. 12, 13. *It was not an enemy, that reproached me: then could I have borne it. Neither was it he, that hated me, that magnified himself against me...But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and my companion.*

[3] It many times heightens impatience, to reflect upon the base Ingratitude and foul Disingenuity of those, from whom we suffer.

Persons, perhaps, whom we have obliged, by the greatest respects imaginable: such, who, we thought, had as much reason to love us, as themselves; and would have been as far from doing us an injury, as their own natures. Yet, for such as these to violate all bonds of friendship, and all laws of gratitude; for such frozen snakes to fly at us, and sting us, whom we have warmed and cherished in our own bosoms, and who, without our support, could not have had the power to mischief us: this,

saith Impatience, makes the injury altogether insufferable; and the highest revenge, that I can take upon them, can scarce expiate it.

(2) But, to cure this fretful distemper of thy spirit, be sure that thou look off from the instruments of thy sufferings, unto God, who is the principal inflicter of them. And, then, if thou wilt but consider the Three foregoing Reflections, thou wilt find, that thine own cannon will be turned against thee; and those, which were provocations to impatience, when thou lookest to men, will prove strong and most forcible arguments for patience, if thou lookest to God.

[1] Thou growest impatient, when thou lookest upon the Meanness and Baseness of those that injure thee: and, wilt thou not be patient, O man! when thou considerest thine own Vileness and Baseness, who yet hast infinitely wronged and injured thy God?

Who, or what, art thou, but breathing dust, a lump of animated mire, the very sediment and dregs of nature? and, yet, how often hast thou daringly provoked and affronted the great and glorious God of Heaven and Earth! Every the least sin thou hast committed, the least vain and unworthy thought, the least idle and impertinent word, is a far greater injury done to God, than the most unjust and violent outrage can be against thee. It is thy fellow-creature, that wrongs thee; one, whose nature and being is altogether as considerable as thine; and, in this respect, differs no more from thee, than two units, in a number, from one another: but thou sinnest against the Infinite Majesty of thy Almighty Creator; in comparison with whom, thou, and all nations of the earth, *are less than nothing and vanity*; more nothing, than nothing itself is. And, wilt not thou be patient under the petulant affronts of thy inferiors, when as thou, who art infinitely inferior unto God, yet livest, and art yet out of hell, only through his patience towards thee?

[2] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the Nearness of the Relation, wherein those, that wrong thee, stand unto thee: but, wilt not thou rather be patient, when thou considerest, in what a Near Relation thou standest unto God, and yet ceasest not daily to affront and injure him?

Thou art his creature; and that is so near, as it challengeth from thee all possible respect and duty: nay, more; thou art his son, or at least hopest and pretendest so, and yet rebellest

against thy Heavenly Father. And, is it much, that thine rebel against thee, since thou thyself rebellest against thine? And,

[3] Thou art impatient, when thou considerest the Ingratitude of those, from whom thou sufferest: but, alas, O man! dost thou never consider thine own towards God?

Is not thy whole dependence upon him? doth not he maintain thee, at his own cost and charges? hath he not educated, and brought thee up, as one of his family and household? doth he not daily provide for thee? doth he not heap his blessings upon thee, and load thee every day with his benefits? And yet, O ungrateful man! thou art daily and hourly wronging and provoking him. And, therefore, if he doth at last chastise and afflict thee, thou hast no reason to murmur and complain: for, it seems, it is but thine own law: it is no otherwise, than thou wouldst thyself deal with thy fellow-creature, over whom thou hast no such right; and from whom thou hast not suffered, by infinite proportions, so much as thy God hath done from thee.

Thus, I say, by turning off our eyes from the instruments, to the principal cause of our sufferings, we may cure and remove that impatience, which is apt to grate upon and exasperate our spirits.

5. *Reflecting upon a former more prosperous condition*, is oftentimes a great provocation unto impatience under our present sufferings.

Nothing puts a sharper edge upon our afflictions, than to compare present miseries with past felicities. But, in this, we may see very much of the perverseness of our nature, in turning that, which ought to be an engagement to our thankfulness, into an occasion of murmuring. For, either thy former prosperity was a mercy, or not: if not, thou hast no cause to complain for the change: if it were, certainly, thou hast a reason rather to bless God, than to repine that he hath blessed thee.

And thus I have finished the consideration of those generals, which I propounded. I hope, I need not press any thing more, than what hath already been offered. And, if the serious review of what arguments and motives have been mentioned, will not suffice to compose the mind, it is much to be doubted, whether such men's spirits be not ulcerous beyond all cure.

Only, let me add this for our encouragement, that this hard and difficult duty will be but for a little while incumbent upon

us. Whatsoever is irksome in religion, will shortly be over: and, when we are passed through this vale of tears and misery, as our faith shall be turned into vision, our hope into fruition, so our patience shall be turned into joy and triumph.

This was the consideration, which St. Paul himself used, under all his sufferings; and shall be the subject of my next discourse.

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CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE STATE,
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2 COR. iv. 18.

WHILE WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN, BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN: FOR THE THINGS, WHICH ARE SEEN, ARE TEMPORAL; BUT THE THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, ARE ETERNAL.

THESE words are a strange paradox; and are brought in by the Apostle, to confirm a position, which, to most men, may seem as much a paradox as themselves.

In the precedent verses, he asserts afflictions to be advantageous, and losses beneficial; that we improve by our decays, and may reckon our sorrows and troubles to be our gain and interest.

And this he makes good to us, whether we consider Grace or Glory.

As to Grace, he tells us, v. 16. *Though our outward man decay, yet our inward man is renewed daily.* As sharp and nipping winters do to the earth, so do afflictions to the heart: they mellow it, and make it fruitful. These goads in our sides, as troublesome as they are, yet serve to quicken us to our work, and make us mend our pace to heaven: for Christians are like clocks; the more weight is hung upon them, the faster they go.

And, then, as for Glory, he tells us, in the verse immediately foregoing my text, that their afflictions do but work out this. The cross stands in the highway to the crown. It was by this, that our Lord himself obtained it; and he hath since ordained, that all his followers should pass the same way. *We must, through many tribulations, enter into glory: Acts xiv. 22.* This is the pathway to heaven, which is strewed all along with thorns. And, though the Scripture asks, *Do men gather grapes of thorns?*

yet, certainly, these thorns shall yield a plentiful and a pleasant vintage. Poverty, reproach, persecution, imprisonment, sickness, yea death itself, take whatsoever is most stern and most dreadful to human nature, though they may seem to be oppressing tyrants, yet they are, indeed, but faithful and laborious servants: they are working out glory for us: and if, in doing their work, they break either our bodies or estates in pieces; yet, so long as out of that rubbish they work and mould a mass of glory, we may rest ourselves well satisfied in such an advantageous loss. This is an abundant encouragement to bear afflictions, not only with patience, but with joy too: for, God having promised that all things shall work together for our good, it is the greatest folly in the world, to complain that the potion is not pleasant, which the skill of the Great Physician hath tempered for our health; and let us rest confidently assured of it, that as much as we wish our condition otherwise than it is, so much we wish it should be worse with us than it is.

But, yet, the frailty of human nature being such, that it is ready to sink under every burden which God lays upon it, it cannot have too many supports. The Apostle, therefore, not only assures them, that their afflictions work for their glory and happiness; but, moreover, makes a comparison, wherein he shews them, how infinitely their reward shall surpass their sufferings.

And this comparison stands upon a Twofold Antithesis, or opposition of the one to the other.

The afflictions, which they here endure, are but *light* afflictions; but the glory, which they shall receive hereafter, is *an exceeding weight*: Το καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν βάρους: *an exceeding, excessive weight of glory*. He labours, you see, to express it; and he expresseth it so great, as if he must again labour to bear it. Their crown of glory shall be so massy and ponderous, that it will be as much as the soul will be able to stand under: it is a weight, a load of glory.

But then, again, he compares them in duration, as well as weight. Their afflictions are but short and momentary; but the glory, that shall be revealed, is durable and eternal: *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Now, it is a very difficult thing to persuade wretched and miserable men, that their afflictions are but light and short. Every little pressure is a load, and every hour an age. We reckon our time by

quite different measures, when we are in adversity, from those which we use when we are happy and prosperous. In prosperity, time imparts its wings, and flies away apace, before us: life, we think, glides along too fast in a smooth and even way. But, when the way is rugged and miry, the hours then seem slow-paced and loitering: and, quite contrary to the course of nature, our summer and sun-shine days are the shortest, and our winter are the only long and tedious ones.

What, then, makes the Apostle here give in such a different account concerning afflictions, from that of other men? that, when they reckon the least and shortest to be long and heavy, he should here determine quite contrary, and assert the greatest to be but light and momentary? He satisfies us in the reason of this strange and paradoxical assertion, in the words of the text; and tells us, that we shall account all the afflictions of this life light and short, *while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*

But this may seem to be no better, than the resolving of a question by propounding a riddle. For, to *look at things not seen*, to see things invisible, can appear no other than a perplexing riddle to most men, who live more by sense than they do by faith.

I shall, therefore, first clear the words from the doubtfulness and ambiguity of the phrase: and then collect from them the principal subject, on which I intend to insist at present.

I. We have, **IN THESE WORDS**, the Apostle's practice, and the reason of it. His practice: *We look not at things seen, but at things not seen*: the reason, because *things seen are temporal, but things not seen are eternal.*

Here let us briefly enquire,

What is meant by *things seen*.

What, by *things not seen*.

What, by looking both at the one and the other.

As for the other two expressions, that *things seen are temporal*, but *things not seen are eternal*; I suppose them known to all who have but a notion of the difference of time from eternity. Briefly, the one have their original, continuance, and period, in the revolution of time, and are measured by days and years: the other never had beginning, or, at least, never shall have end; and so, are exempt, either one way or both, from the jurisdiction of time and change.

i. By THINGS SEEN, may be well understood, all sublunary occurrences, whether prosperous or adverse, good or evil. And these, not taken so restrainedly, as to be limited to our bodily sight, as if *things seen* should only be those objected to our eyes; but, more largely, whatsoever is any way sensible or present to us, that may be here reckoned among *things seen*. For, because it is necessary to our corporeal sight, that objects be present; therefore, the Apostle expresseth things present by the notion of being seen. And, indeed, it bears the same latitude with that common expression of the Wise Man, *All things under the sun*: all things under the sun being, as it were, illustrated by his light, may be said to be *things seen*. But here, accommodating this expression to the drift of the Apostle in the context, we must take these *things seen*, for the more severe occurrences of our lives; for the miseries, afflictions, and troubles we are exposed unto; for the dark and gloomy side of those objects, that are presented unto us: *Our light affliction.....worketh for us an exceeding.....weight of glory*, while we look not at *things seen*: they conduce to our happiness, while we look not on the grim and direful aspect of our sufferings, so as to be frightened by them from our duty and obedience.

ii. Though THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN, may be of several sorts; as things distant, things future, things spiritual, may all of them be unseen, and each of them may have several kinds under it: yet, here, according to the symmetry of the Apostle's discourse, are meant those future things, which constitute our final and everlasting estate; and they may be referred either to heaven or hell, to our glory or condemnation. These are *the things not seen*, which a true Christian looks at. We look not at the visible enjoyments, the honours, profits, pleasures of this world; no, nor yet at the loss of all these: but at those things, which are of infinite and everlasting consequence; at the insufferable pains and torments of hell, with care how we may escape that condemnation; and at the infinite and endless joys of heaven, with earnest desires and suitable endeavours to obtain them.

iii. To LOOK AT these, denotes not here any act of the sense; but, as often elsewhere in Scripture, of the understanding and affections. There is an eye of the soul, as well as of the body; and that is the understanding. Now, because, when we con-

sider and ponder any object presented to our bodily eyes, we usually look intently upon it; therefore, also, when the understanding seriously regards those objects which are not visible by our bodily eyes, we may be said to look upon them.

So that the sense is: We regard not, we mind not the things which are seen; the world, nor any of its frowns or favours: our thoughts are pitched upon other objects; and fly a strain above, and beyond this world; we regard that endless state that is to come, more than all those vain and empty things that lie before us. And, while we do so, we find a great deal of reason to account all our afflictions light and momentary, which shortsighted men, who pore only upon what is present, groan under, as long and burdensome. And it is, indeed, but reason, that we should thus overlook what is present, and fix our regard upon what is future. For present things are but temporal: once they were not: and, if they be good things, when God hath turned over a few more days and years, either they shall not be, or we shall not be here to enjoy them; or, if they be evil things, either they must shortly perish, or we must perish from under them: or, as Antoninus, the emperor, speaks well, Το μὲν ἀφ' ὧν ἐξέρχεται, το δε χρόνιον φ' ὧν ἐξέρχεται: "Whatsoever befalls us in this life, if it be intolerable, it cannot be lasting, and we shall soon fail under it; or, if it be lasting, it cannot be intolerable, but we may endure it." But, the things, which are future and not seen, are eternal: to that state we are all hasting, that is of perpetual duration; where woe and torments, or joy and bliss, shall have no end for ever. And, therefore, it is but reasonable, rather to consider, how we shall be entertained there, than how we are used here.

And thus I have, as briefly as well I could, given the scope and meaning of the words.

II. From them, we may COLLECT Two Propositions.

i. That THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE ETERNAL STATE WILL MAKE US OVERLOOK, AND, WITH A HOLY GENEROUSNESS, DESPISE ALL THE PRESENT TROUBLES AND AFFLICTIONS, THAT WE MEET WITH IN THIS LIFE.

To despise them, I say, not indeed as they are *the chastenings of the Lord*, for so we are forbidden it, Prov. iii. 11. but as they accidentally prove to be temptations to us, to desert the service

of God, which exposeth us to the scorn and opposition of the world, to embrace the more profitable or creditable service of sin and the Devil: to despise them so, as not to make any great reckoning, whether we be afflicted or no. And, thus to despise them, is the right means not to faint, when we are corrected. We see how this wrought upon the Apostle: Rom. viii. 18. *I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* As the earth, if we consider it alone, in its own proper dimensions, appears to be of a vast circumference and magnitude; but, compare it to the larger circuit of the heavens, and then, in respect of their unmeasurable expansion, this whole globe is but a small speck and indivisible point: so the Apostle institutes the comparison between temporal afflictions and eternal glory. Afflictions, indeed, to those, who look no farther than upon their present sufferings, may appear great, and heavy, and endless; but, when we compare earth with heaven, the afflictions here with the glory hereafter, they are light, inconsiderable nothings. It is but as if a man should be troubled that he is hungry, when he is just sitting down to a feast; or, as if he should think much of it, that he must kneel to have an honour conferred upon him. Yea, our Apostle so compares present sufferings with future glory, that he plainly tells us, there is no comparison between them: *they are not worthy to be compared.* But, I shall wave this, at present.

ii. The second observable, that I collect from the text, is this, that THERE IS NOTHING WORTH THE REGARD OF A CHRISTIAN, BUT HIS ETERNAL STATE. We look not at things present, for they are but temporal; but at things future, for they are eternal.

In prosecuting this, I shall, first, lay down some Demonstrations of the proposition; and, then, reflect upon the wretched Temper of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state.

The Demonstrations are briefly these:

1. This is *the End of our Lives, to provide for our Eternal State.*

There is a Twofold great end of man: one, in respect of God; and that is, the promoting of his glory: the other, in respect of ourselves; and that is, the promoting of our own happiness. Upon these very designs hath God sent us into the world, that we might glorify him, and save our own souls: and

he hath been graciously pleased so to entwist these two together, that, in glorifying him, we do but glorify ourselves, and, in working for him, we do but work for our own interests and advantage. Yea, indeed, no man can glorify God, but he, who is careful and industrious to promote his own salvation and happiness: and, therefore, saith our Saviour, John xv. 8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*: but, to whom is this fruit beneficial? not to God, but to ourselves: it is such fruit, as the Apostle speaks of, Phil. iv. 17. *Fruit, that may abound to their account*. This is that, which differenceth the great end of man, from that of beasts: they were all created, that they might, in their several kinds, honour and glorify God, as well as man; but they have no immortal part, as man hath, for whose everlasting happiness they should be obliged to provide. Self-preservation is the utmost natural end of all creatures; and such as their self is, such will be their endeavours to preserve it: brute creatures, whose self is only temporal, seek only their temporal preservation, as best accommodated to their natures and principles; but, in man, the self is immortal, eternal: and, therefore, unless our care be laid out about our eternal concerns, we fall far short of our end; and, in seeking the things of this world, we seek only a temporal preservation; that is, we infinitely degrade ourselves, and act only upon the principles and for the ends of brute beasts.

2. We ought chiefly to regard our eternal state, our everlasting happiness and welfare, because *this is the only thing, which our care can secure to us in this world*.

Nothing else can here be made sure, but our future inheritance of life and glory. We are not certain of any worldly comforts, which we enjoy in possession: much less are we certain of any in reversion. Change and vicissitude are written in capital letters upon all things under the sun. There is no stability in any condition, here on earth. He, who stands highest, stands but upon ice: his footing is but uncertain, and his fall will be but the more desperate. But things eternal are sure in themselves; and they may be made sure to us: they are sure in themselves; and, therefore, called by the Apostle, Heb. x. 34. *a better and an enduring substance*: and they may be made sure to us; as certain as the word of God is true, and the seal of his Spirit inviolable. A Christian is a man wholly made up of paradoxes: he is *poor, and yet maketh many rich*: he hath *nothing, and yet possesseth all things*: he is *sorrowful, yet*

always rejoicing: things not seen, are the things that he looks at: and, contrary to the guise of other men, he is surest of the things, which he doth not see; and those, which he hath in his hands and in his sight, he accounts the most uncertain and deceitful. Again,

3. As nothing else can be made sure to us, besides our eternal state; so, indeed, *there is nothing else worth making sure, but only that*: and, therefore, a Christian's care about things eternal, is most rational and becoming.

If I could lay an arrest upon the mutability of affairs, and drive such a pin into the wheel of Providence as should keep it from turning; if I could give laws to fate, and prescribe to myself the measures of mine own prosperity: yet, alas! what great matter were all this, since, when we give in a true account of all these temporal things, which we call by so many names and set down so many items for, it amounts, in the sum, to no more but this, meat for the belly, and clothes for the back! hunger and nakedness are the only necessities of life: and, certainly, he, who takes care for more than will just supply these, than will serve to satisfy hunger and cover nakedness, he doth but take care for diseases or burdens. To what purpose is it, therefore, O Worldling! that thou amassest together such heaps of riches? for things that are necessary, so much needs not; and, for things unnecessary, thou needest not them. I have read of a philosopher, who, passing through a well-stored market and casting his eyes upon the plenty and abundance of all sorts of provision that were there brought to be sold, blessed himself with this reflection: "Oh!" saith he, "how many things are there here, that I do not want!" Yea, those few things, which are barely necessary to life, yet are not worth our anxious and solicitous care: so our Saviour assures us, Mat. vi. 25. *I say unto you, Take no care for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on*: food and raiment themselves ought not to be carked for; these necessities of life, whether we have them or no, yet we shall not long want them: if they be denied to us, we shall, in a very short time, be in a condition, wherein we shall no more need such poor supplies; where our life shall not be so feeble, as to need support from the staff of bread; and where a coverlet of dust and worms will be as well as a royal robe. Of what worth are those things, over which death hath the dominion? What will it be to any of us, one age hence, that we have been rich, or

great, or honourable? that we have lived a-top of the world, and enjoyed all things in it at wish? Certainly, our dust will know no heraldry: dead bones will keep no distance: all our prerogatives will be levelled in the grave; and all those little differences which we put between ourselves and others, our style, our titles, and our names, will be all blotted in that dust that buries us. Why, then, should we be so vain, as to lay out our care, and our time, and our strength, upon those things, which can go no farther with us than to the brink of the grave, when as the soul is to live infinite ages afterwards? Life, should it reach to that which we call extreme old age, yet is it all but the childhood of man: and, it is as great a folly to busy ourselves about the things which belong to this temporal life, as it were to lay up the playthings of childhood to be the comfort and solace of age.

4. *Nothing in this world is truly satisfactory.*

And, therefore, there is great reason, we should look beyond temporal things which are seen, unto things eternal which are not seen. Here, when our real wants are supplied, as indeed a very little will suffice to do that, yet our craving desires are boundless, and will still torment us: but, in a blessed eternity, we shall neither want any thing which we should have, nor desire any thing but what we have. But I must hasten.

5. *Because eternity is an unchangeable state.*

There, is no repenting, nor amending of errors, nor recalling of mistakes. It will be too late then, to desire forgiveness or to hope for mercy. If these things be not now done in this world, alas! it will be for ever too late, when once you are entered into an unchangeable condition. It is not so in earthly concerns: if, by imprudence, we have brought ourselves into any straits or difficulties, we may afterwards correct our miscarriages, and redeem ourselves from those inconveniencies. But our eternal state stands fixed and immutable, for ever. Death delivers us over to judgment, in the same condition in which it finds us; and judgment delivers us up, either to glory or to condemnation, both unalterable. This life is the only time allotted us, to make provision for eternity. Every day, and hour, wears away a considerable part of our lives; yea, we are nearer to eternity, while we are speaking this. We are all of us hastening to our last abode; and a few days will determine our everlasting condition. And, therefore, it principally concerns us, chiefly to mind how we may obtain that glory

which is unalterable, and escape that damnation which will be remediless.

That is a Fifth Demonstration.

6. And, lastly, (together with which, I shall give you some reflections on the folly of most men, who regard every thing but their souls and their eternal state :) because *nothing, but what is eternal, can bear any proportion to the soul: and, therefore, nothing, besides that, is worth our regard.*

Indeed, were man only made up of dust and clay, were his constitution wholly material, temporal things might well suit so gross and sordid a composure. But there is in him a divine spark, an ethereal and spiritual substance, by which he is of kin to the angels, yea, and bears some resemblance of God himself: yea, indeed, it is not so much in him, as it is himself: the soul is the greatest and chief part of man: the body is but his garment, or his utensil. Now, nothing temporal is proportioned to this soul, which is immortal, and shall survive the death of the world, when heaven and earth and all things shall fall in their last funeral flames. And, oh! what will become of thy immortal soul, if thou hast laid up for thyself no better things than these, which thou canst never rake from out of the ashes of the universe, nor redeem from the general consumption that God will bring upon them? Whosoever lies down on these, thinking here to take his rest, doth but, as the Prophet speaks, stretch himself upon a bed that is too short for him, infinitely too short: the greater part of himself lies over and beyond these temporal things, and reaches as far as into eternity. And, yet, as short a date as the world itself bears, still it is more lasting than thy present life: death will soon snatch us from all these dear and precious vanities, that we set our hearts upon: they cannot go one step with us, beyond this present life: they, like the rest of our friends, may attend on us as far as the grave, but there must leave us. And, oh! what a sad parting hour will it be, when the soul must be hurried away into another world, and leave all its provisions behind in this, and have nothing to support, nothing to cherish it, to all eternity! Do but seriously consider, what a boundless and infinite state eternity is: it is a duration, that overwhelms all our thoughts; and, though they can, at one glance, pierce both earth and heaven, and make an axis to the world, yet, when we attempt to measure out the unwearied stretch of eternity, they grow giddy, and sink, and leave us nothing but confusion, disorder, and astonishment:

when we have reckoned up all the ages that arithmetic can sum, yet, these are but the threshold to eternity; for, it is a state, wherein ages, yea millions of ages, make no difference. Now, tell me, doth it not strike a chill horror through you, to consider, that, within a few days, or, it may be, hours, you must enter upon that unalterable condition, wherein days, and years, and ages, are swallowed up as nothing, nor allowed to be so much as points of that duration? and this incomprehensible eternity, to be either inconceivably glorious, or insufferably wretched and tormenting? And, what! shall we, who may be in this very state, ere our breath returns to us again, or our pulses beat once more; shall we be so stupid, and brutish, as to be affected only with these present things which perish with the using, and neglect that state which is of eternal duration and infinite concernment? Certainly, one would think, that men had some very great business to do upon earth, that they can neither afford time nor thoughts about heaven and their eternal interests: well, what are these mighty affairs, that so employ them? why truly, poor, vile, vain trifles: some are devising their pleasures, how they may melt away their days in luxury: others are scraping together muck and thick clay; others dangerously aspiring to dignity and honour: this is the great business and employment of the world; which, when I seriously reflect upon, seems to me as vain and sottish, as if a man, in a shipwreck, should only take care to preserve his clothes from wetting, when he himself is drowning. Vain men! death is at your heels; and, at its, judgment and eternity. Is it time for you to mind every trifle of this life? how to make a compliment or a visit, when you are just splitting against the rock of ages, and plunging into the lake of fire and brimstone? Is it time for you now to pursue your pleasures, when everlasting burnings are kindling upon you? in which, unless you be here persuaded to embrace the severities of a holy life, you must for ever wallow; for ever, without ease or release? Is it time for thee to hoard up thy wealth, and to lay up goods for many years, when yet thou knowest not, whether God will not take away thy unprovided soul this very night? Death and eternity are coming upon us: we are all entering upon our everlasting state: and, if these temporal things be those, which we chiefly regard, they shall perish, and we perish together with them, for ever.

III. Now, then, be EXHORTED,

I. NOT TO DELAY THY PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY, ONE DAY OR HOUR LONGER.

Depend not upon the warning of a sick-bed: God doth not always afford it; but, sometimes, doth execution before he shoots off a warning-piece: and, why may it not be so with thee? Possibly, again, thy sickness may be such, as may render thee incapable of doing thy last good office for thy soul: however, I am sure, it is the unfittest time of all thy life, then to be making up thy accounts, when thou shouldst be giving them in; then to have thy evidences to clear, when thou shouldst produce them.

ii. If thou wouldst be prepared for eternity, LIVE EVERY DAY SO, AS IF EVERY DAY WERE THY DYING AND THY LAST DAY, AND THE VERY NEXT TO ETERNITY.

If it be not so, it is more than thou knowest. And, therefore, since we have no assurance of an hour or day longer, it is but reason and wisdom, to look upon every one as that which may be our last.

iii. BE CONSTANT IN THE EXERCISE OF A HOLY LIFE; and be always doing that, which thou wouldst be content Christ should find thee doing, when he comes to judge thee.

Think with thyself, if thou wert now upon thy sick-bed, and hadst received the sentence of death, and sawest thy friends stand mourning about thee ready to close up thine eyes in a long night, what would be thy thoughts, what thy discourses. Let the same seriousness of thoughts and discourses fill up every day of thy life: for thou knowest not, whether thou art not as near death, as those, whom their friends and physicians have given over.

iv. LABOUR FOR AN ASSURED HOPE OF GLORY.

This will make thy passage into eternity lightsome and joyful. When thou, and all things in the world, must take leave and part for ever, then, to have the sense of the love of God, and our interest in Christ, and our title to eternal life, will sweetly bear up our hearts in a dying hour. These are things, which are as immortal as thy soul is, and will enter heaven with thee,

and abide with thee to all eternity. Oh! whom will it not comfort, to think, that death will change his bottle into a spring? that, though here our waters sometimes failed us, yet, in heaven, whither we are going, we shall bathe in an infinite ocean of delight, and shall lie at the breast of an ever-flowing fountain of life and sweetness? Whosoever hath but such an assurance as this, cannot but welcome death with embraces; and, while his soul struggles to unclasp itself and get loose from the body, cannot but, with holy panting and longing, say, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

So naturally does the consideration of our future eternal state, not only make us despise the afflictions of this life, but set us above the fears of death itself: which is to be the subject of my next discourse.

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR FUTURE STATE
and abide with thee to all eternity. Oh! whom will it not
condemn, to think that death will change his body into a spring?
that it will be as our water sometimes failed us, yet, in his
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of delight, and shall lie at the breast of an ever-flowing foun-
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1 COR. xv. 55.

Read - Gospel
6 Sept. 1818

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?

IN this chapter, the Apostle largely insists upon that Article of the Christian Faith, which is so far above the reach and comprehension of reason, that even those, who were the professed masters of reason, the wise Athenians, among whom both learning and civility were in their highest elevation, yet could not abstain from railing abuses, when St. Paul preached of the resurrection unto them: Acts xvii. 18. *What will this babbler say? and, He seemeth to be a setter-forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.* So strange and uncouth a doctrine did this appear, that, as they thought he recommended Jesus to them for a new God; so they thought that this *ἀναστασις*, or *Resurrection*, was some new-invented Goddess, that Paul himself worshipped, and whose votaries he would persuade them to be. Which, howsoever, had certainly been of a better rank, than many of that rabble of deities, which they owned and worshipped: for both Cicero and Clemens Alexandrinus testify of these learned Athenians, who rejected the Resurrection as a strange and novel God, that they yet erected temples to Contumely and Impudence, Diseases and Ill-Fortune: and it is pity, they should not always have the favour and presence of those deities. There was scarce any superstition so absurdly ridiculous, which these sages would not rather embrace, than the belief of a Future Resurrection; which they accounted a downright affront to the principles of reason and learning. They could not comprehend a possibility in the re-union of the separate soul and body; so contrary to their celebrated maxim, à

privatione ad habitum non datur regressus : nor could they conceive, that dust, scattered to the four winds of heaven, and subjected to so many changes, and made the ingredients of so many other bodies, could ever be re-collected, and kneaded up again into the same body to which it did originally belong.

But I shall have no occasion presently to vindicate the possibility of the resurrection ; and to demonstrate, that, though it may be above the reach of reason to conceive, yet it is not beyond the reach of omnipotence to effect.

It is more pertinent, at present, to observe, that the Apostle draws a most firm and natural consequence from the belief of the resurrection, to fortify us against the dread of death. Doth the husbandman fear to commit his grain to the earth, because it must there die and rot, and lie buried under clods and dirt ; whereas he knows, that all these changes tend only to make it afterwards sprout up more flourishing and verdant, with the greater beauty and increase ? So it is, saith the Apostle, with our bodies : vv. 42, 43. They are *sown in corruption* ; but *raised in incorruption* : they are *sown in dishonour* ; but *raised in glory* : they are *sown in weakness* ; but *raised in power* : there they lie hid under the deep furrows of the grave, suffering all the debasements of stench, worms, and putrefaction ; but God, the Great Husbandman of the World, doth but sow us in the ground : we shall certainly sprout up again, and appear more beautiful and glorious. These ruins of our bodies shall be made a foundation for a more stately edifice : *This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality* : v. 53.

Now, the certain hope and expectation of this blessed change quite disarms death, and leaves it without any venom or malignity against a believer. To what purpose is all that ghastly train, which attends this king of terrors ; diseases, pains, and languors ? when they have done the utmost that they are able, they can but cast him to the earth, whence, Antæus like, he riseth again with redoubled vigour. God deals with us, as the Chinese do with their precious earth : he lays us long under ground, that we may be refined ; and made fit to be vessels of honour prepared for our master's use. What a weak and impotent adversary is this, whose assaults are our advantage, and whose conquests prove his own overthrow !

And, upon this very consideration, the Apostle doth, in my text, insult over this contemptible enemy : *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?*

Death is here represented to us as a venomous serpent; but such a one, as hath lost his sting: so that, though it may hiss against us, yet it cannot wound us.

Where is thy sting? that is, Where is that, which threatened to convey thy noxious and baneful poison into us? where is that, which is thought so formidable, so destructive and pernicious, in death? And this very question intimates to us, that there is nothing left of this venomous quality; that now, to a faithful servant of Christ, there is nothing deadly, no not in death itself. I remember, I have somewhere read of a kind of serpent whose poison is so very virulent and of such quick dispatch, that it doth immediately dissolve the body, and reduce it to dust.

This sting, and this venom in it, death doth indeed still retain, even against the best of men; and those, whom it smites, shall certainly crumble away into dust. This sting, therefore, still remains.

And, for its victories, the grave too can boast as many, as it hath trophies erected in the monuments, inscriptions, and scattered bones of those whom it hath slain. But, when omnipotence shall rally every loose and dispersed dust into its former station; when we shall become heavenly from earth, and deathless from death; we may justly, without fear, despise the injuries of death, and tread with triumph upon the earth that must bury us.

Observe, hence, That THE HOPE OF A BLESSED AND GLORIOUS RESURRECTION IS THE ONLY SUFFICIENT SECURITY AGAINST THE DREAD OF DEATH, AND A CHRISTIAN'S MOST GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

In prosecuting this, I shall only speak to these Two things.

First. I shall shew, that all other considerations are too weak and feeble, to assure the soul against the rough assaults and violent terrors of death.

Secondly. I shall shew you what there is in the hopes and expectation of a glorious resurrection, that may embolden us to despise death, as a conquered enemy; and to upbraid it with this holy scorn of the Apostle, *O death, where is thy sting?*

I. For the first, That ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ARE TOO WEAK TO ENCOURAGE US; let us consider those fearful and horrid notions, that nature hath imprinted

upon us against its enemy ; how wan and dismal it represents his visage : so that, though there be nothing more certain, by the statute law of heaven, than that we must die ; yet, withal, there is nothing more difficult, than to persuade men to die willingly.

The old philosophers and wise men of all ages have ransacked the whole magazine of reason ; and have put into our hands all the weapons they could there find, which they thought might embolden us to encounter this dreadful enemy. But yet, as the Lord Verulam well observes, all their great preparations, instead of diminishing its dread, only served to make it appear the more fearful : all the cost and skill, which they bestowed upon their armour, made them but the richer prey to the victor ; and only served to enhance the conquests of death, that could lay such rational and argumentative heads in the dust. And, indeed, whatsoever mere natural reason can put upon us, is rather for pomp than use ; more to embellish the mind, than to fortify the heart : for there is not any thing, which these grave moralists do, with so much ostentation and contempt of death, offer unto the world, that, if it be rationally scanned, can prove a solid ground for peace and comfort in a dying hour.

All, that they inculcate in their discourses on this sad theme, may be, I think, reduced to these Three heads : either

The Necessity of Dying ; or,

Our Freedom by it from the Cares and Troubles of this Life. Or,

The Hopes of a future Reward.

But none of these, so far as reason alone can discover it, will be a sufficient defence against the sting of death, nor gain the victory from the grave. For,

i. What relief is it, to tell us, that DEATH IS NECESSARY ? that it is the common lot of all men ? that every compounded being hath those fatal principles wreathed up in it, that will certainly work its dissolution ; and that therefore it becomes the reason and the spirit of a man, to entertain that fate which is unavoidable, with a constancy which is unmoveable ?

This is frequently urged by Heathen philosophers, in their preparations against the fear of death. *Προς την αναγκην εν αγκραινεται, εδε απρονοητα ειναι τιθεται τα προς ημας, εαν το θνητον αποθνησκη*, saith Hierocles. “ A wise man will not fret himself at necessity, nor look upon it as some strange unexpected acci-

dent: if that, which is mortal, die; and that, which is compounded of parts, fall asunder." But, alas! what comfort is all this; since that, which they bring for our support, is the very thing that frights us? It is the inevitableness of death, that makes it so exceeding terrible: it were not so dreadful, were it avoidable. And, therefore, to arm men against the fear of death, because it is the common lot of all, is, in my judgment, to as little purpose, as if, to comfort some pitiful wretch, they should bid him be of good cheer, for that he must necessarily be miserable and wretched.

And, then,

ii. As for the FREEDOM, which they tell us death gives FROM THE CARES, SORROWS, AND TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE; that it is the safest and most secure refuge; the only port we can make, when we are beaten with the storms and tempests of the world: though they insist on it as a principal remedy against the fear of death; yet, if this be all, that we shall no longer suffer hunger, nor cold, nor pain, nor misery; that death is a universal cure for all diseases; that it alone removes the wants, which life could not supply; all this will fall very short of being a sufficient encouragement to undergo that last arrest, with a becoming temper.

For this, if there be no more, is but like the changing of a fever into a lethargy: and only brings us into a gloomy quiet; in which, as we have no sense of torment, so neither shall we have any of ease and comfort. And to be thus free from the burdens and pressures of life, will be no more a solace to us after death, than it was before we were born. And I am apt to think, that there are but very few, who would not be willing to compound for their beings with their troubles: like the weary traveller in the apologue, who sinking under his burden, cried for death to come and ease him; but when he beheld him appear so very grim and meagre, asking sourly why he called for him, he meekly told him, that it was only to help him up with his load again. So, without doubt, it would fare with most men, if they had no farther hope than merely to be eased of the cares and sorrows of this life: they would rather wish to have them continue upon them to eternity, than to be eased of them at such a privative rate; since being is more dear, than sufferings are troublesome. But,

iii. What human reason alone can discover of a FUTURE REWARD, though it be infinitely mean and sordid, in comparison with those sublime and refined joys which God hath promised to us in his word; yet this, indeed, might be some antidote against the envenomed sting of death, and a support against the dread and terror of it, if reason could as well secure our right unto it, as make discovery of it.

But reason, even in Heathens themselves, hath prepared a place of punishment, as well as of bliss; and the consciences of all men do, doubtless, discover unto them every day that guilt, for which their reason alone could never yet discover a sufficient expiation: so that, instead of arming us against the fears of death, reason, if we pursue it in its closest consequences, redoubles those terrors; and, by proving us transgressors of the natural law that God hath written in every man's heart, argues us a'il into torments. Hence we read of such strange lustrations, and horrid methods of expiating guilt; that, usually, they then committed the greatest crimes, when they thought to compensate for them, and their very religion was the most abominable part of their sins. If, therefore, mere reason can conclude, that there is a future state of happiness and misery to be proportioned out according to men's demerits, and their consciences tell them that their demerits are such as entitle them only to punishment; when they can find out no likely way of atonement for their guilt, this, instead of encouraging them against the dread of death, must needs make the fear thereof more tormenting and killing, than if they were not at all conscious of any such future state. Besides, all, that our natural understanding can discover to be the reward of just actions, is only a partial bliss to crown the soul of man; which, indeed, some sects of philosophers held to be immortal, and to survive the funerals of the body: but none of them ever believed the resurrection of the flesh; and so give up the one half of man to be lost and desperate. Now, who would not fear that dreadful stroke, that should quite cleave away one half of him, never to be recovered nor reunited? Who would not fear to undergo that change, after which he must be no longer a man, but only exist a bare and naked soul?

So that you see, all other considerations, which reason and philosophy can afford us, without the expectation of a glorious

resurrection, cannot be a sufficient defence nor security to us against the fears of death: those things are rather flourishes of wit, than armour of proof: and that last encounter, in which we must all be engaged against that last enemy, will prove too rough and boisterous for the fineness of such formal arguments to make good. If men's consolations be no better than these; That death is necessary; That, by it, they shall be freed from the cares and miseries of this life; and, That their souls shall survive, but, whether in weal or woe, they are not well assured: if this be all, when they come to die, it will fare with them as with cunning fencers in the midst of a confused battle, they will soon be put by all their artificial play, and find that their postures and their wardings are all insignificant and useless.

Indeed, that, which alone can enable men to meet death with an undaunted boldness, must be something either much below human reason, as rashness and desperation; or, else, something vastly above it, as divine grace and revelation: and this, Christian Religion only hath made known to the world: discovering a perfect expiation for sin, in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, the Eternal Son of God; and, withal, giving us ample assurance, upon a pious and holy life, of attaining to a joyful and blessed resurrection, where the entire man shall eternally possess a full and entire happiness. By the former, it takes away the sting of death, which is sin: by the latter, it recovers the victory from the grave, and throws down all its trophies; letting those out to life and liberty, whom it detained as its captives and prisoners.

And, thus, I have finished the First thing propounded; and have shewn you, that all other considerations, besides that of a glorious and blessed Resurrection, are too feeble to assure and encourage men against the fears of death.

II. The Second is, to shew you, WHAT THERE IS IN THE HOPES AND EXPECTATION OF THIS BLESSED RESURRECTION, THAT MAY EMBOLDEN US TO DESPISE DEATH AND TO TRIUMPH OVER THE GRAVE.

And, here, I shall not speak of the glory, that shall be conferred on the whole man, which is consequent to the resurrection: but confine myself to those advantages, which we shall have in the body only.

1. It shall be raised AN ENTIRE AND PERFECT BODY.

Not a dust, not an atom, that is necessary to the integration of it, shall be lost: and, though they be scattered up and down the world, and confusedly mixed with other beings; yet, by the omnipotence of God and the ministry of angels, every dust shall be picked up again, and set in its due place and order. To this purpose Tertullian speaks well: *Si non integros suscitatur Deus, non suscitatur mortuos, &c*: "If God doth not raise us up entire, he doth not raise the dead:" for, if any part of us be not raised, as to that we are still dead.

ii. As it shall be raised up entire and perfect, so EVERY MEMBER OF IT SHALL BE MADE SUCH, AS MAY BE MOST SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOUL, AND MOST CAPABLE OF THE RECEIPT OF GLORY.

We shall not find our bodies so restive nor so unwieldy, as too often here we do. They now hang upon us as heavy clogs, and depress us when we should be soaring up to heaven. Then, we shall no longer need our Saviour's gracious excuse for our infirmities: Mat. xxvi. 41. *The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak*. No; this flesh of ours, in that glorified estate, shall hold out in all the rapturous exercises of the soul: and, whereas now we are dull when we hear, and drowsy when we pray, and distracted when we meditate, soon tired out in any holy performances; then, when all these dregs and phlegm shall be purged from us, our bodies themselves shall be all light and fire, brisk and sparkling, ready to attend every the least motion of the soul, without reluctance and without weariness.

Then, again,

iii. Though the body shall be thus raised entire, and perfect in all its limbs, YET SHALL THEY NOT PERFORM ANY OF THOSE SORDID OFFICES TO WHICH NOW THEY SERVE.

They shall be discharged from their offices, as the same Tertullian speaks; but yet they shall not therefore cease to be necessary in the body: for, though they lose their offices, yet must they still retain their places; being reserved for the sentence of the Righteous Judge.

1 COR. xv. 56.

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.

Read
Gospel
Sept 6
1888

In the foregoing verse, we have a Christian's Triumph over Death and the Grave, in the expectation of a blessed and glorious Resurrection. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* Shall our scattered dust and ashes be rallied again into the same body? shall that, which was infirm, dishonourable, and mortal, be raised up powerful and active, bright and glorious, impassible as spirits and deathless as eternity? shall we everlastingly survive our funerals? shall we again receive these bodies out of the earth, purified from all earthy, dreggy mixtures and concretions? There can be no consequence more naturally drawn from these premises, than what our Apostle infers: to contemn death, as a feeble and impotent adversary; to trample upon this disarmed worm, without fear of hurt; and to disdain the weakness of its malice, whose greatest spite turns only to our inconceivable advantage.

In the words now before us, and in the ensuing verse, the Apostle makes use of another medium to prove the same assertion, That, to a believer, there is nothing formidable or dreadful, even in death itself.

Now, because in this argument there are many ellipses, many propositions which are silenced, and yet very necessary to be understood, before we can find out the full force of it; I shall endeavour briefly to unfold it, and shew wherein the strength and sinews of the Apostle's reasoning consist.

The great truth, which he would prove, is, That a Christian may well triumph over death.

And this he doth by Two heads of arguments.

The one, drawn from the consideration of the exceeding great advantage and glory, which shall redound even to their very bodies, by the resurrection. And this he, at large, prosecutes, in a great part of this chapter; especially in verses 42, 43, 44. *It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body.*

The other head of arguments is that, which now lies before us to be considered ; which, if it be drawn out at length, contains in it many propositions.

First. That all the pernicious and baneful effects of death proceed from sin ; which, therefore, is here called, *The Sting of Death* : because, as venomous creatures transmit their poison by their sting ; so, likewise, that, which serves to convey into us all the mischief and harm that death can do us, is only sin. And, hence, it is well represented unto us, under that metaphorical expression of a sting : *The Sting of Death is Sin.*

Secondly. That, to believers, this sting is taken out of death, and the venom taken out of that sting. They may take this cold and frozen snake into their bosoms ; and, though it hiss against them, yet it cannot wound them.

And, to prove this, he asserts,

Thirdly. That all the malignity, which sin contains in it, it receives from the Law : *The Strength of Sin is the Law.* For it is the Law only, that gives sin its being : for the Scripture gives us this definition of sin, that it is a *transgression of the Law* : 1 John iii. 4 : and expressly tells us, that *where there is no law, there is no transgression* : Rom. iv. 15. And it is the Law, that gives sin its condemning power, by virtue of that threatening of death and eternal destruction, which God hath denounced against all that shall dare to violate and transgress it : *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die* : Gen. ii. 17. and *the soul, that sinneth, it shall die* : Ezek. xviii. 4.

And, therefore, it necessarily followeth,

Fourthly. That, if the Law, which gives power and malignity to sin, be abolished, we may then confidently triumph over death, whose sting, and all whose power, consists in sin. And,

Fifthly. The Apostle concludes, v. 57. That God hath given us the victory, through Christ ; for he hath abrogated the Law, so far as it gave strength to sin to condemn us. He hath taken away the damning and the cursing power of the Law, by bearing its punishments, and being made a curse for us. *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So that the whole sum of the argument lies in this, That Christ hath taken away the sting of death, which is sin, because he hath abolished the Law, whence sin received all its power and virulency.

These words offer to us these Two Propositions.

That there is a Sting in death.

That this sting is Sin.

But before I can treat of either of these, I must somewhat more fully explain what is meant by that metaphor, the sting of death. It is an allusion to venomous and noxious creatures, whose power to do mischief lies in their stings: there, usually, lies the stock and treasure of their poison, which they diffuse into those, into whom they dart their stings; thereby inflaming their blood, corrupting the whole mass of their humours, causing inexpressible anguish and dolours, and sometimes death and destruction itself. So that, because the sting is the instrument, which conveys so much pain and so much mischief; because it is that, which makes those creatures so formidable and dreadful unto us that are thus naturally armed: therefore the Apostle elegantly transfers this to death; and affirms, That there is something in death, that makes it terrible, painful, and destructive to us; and this he calls the sting of death. So that, in brief, whatsoever makes death frightful and grievous to us, that is this sting of death.

I. THERE IS A STING IN DEATH.

i. That there IS SUCH A STING IN DEATH, and that it is thus formidable and pernicious, appears from these following particulars.

1. *In the horrors of wicked and ungodly men, when they come to die.*

Indeed some, who, by long custom and continuance in sin, have utterly spent and wasted their consciences, go out of the world in a desperate stupidity; senseless of what they are, and careless of what they are like to be: and, with a mad rashness, daringly leap out of life, without ever considering how infinitely deep that dismal precipice is, down which they throw themselves; and that nothing is under them to receive them, but only the lake of fire and brimstone. But, take a man, who hath his sense about him and his reason awake, and who can exercise his consideration and reflection upon his present and future state; stand by the sick-bed of such a one, who hath worn out his life in the service of the Devil, and whose luxury, riot, drunkenness, and uncleanness have been the only grand

business of his life, and the diseases that these have brought upon him the causes of his death; what a sad scene of misery will be there represented to thee! how dreadfully doth he exclaim against himself! what estimations, what outcries, what despair and blackness of horror then seize upon him, when death is haling and rending his soul out of his body! how doth he pull and struggle, and cannot yield to that, which, wretched creature, he cannot avoid! Certainly, death must needs be very terrible to those, who have so soaked and softened themselves by sensuality, that its sting enters deep into them: and, as poison operates most banefully upon them, whose blood and spirits were before heated and inflamed; so, when death comes to diffuse its venom into those, who are set on fire and inflamed with lust and intemperance, the rage and pain, the horror and despair, that it will work in such, will be unspeakably hideous and dreadful.

2. It appears likewise, *in the unwillingness, even of the dearest of God's children, to undergo this last, rude, and violent shock of death.*

Yea, and though they have not only comfortable hopes and persuasions, but the clearest evidence and the fullest assurance, that Christ Jesus shall be unto them, both in life and death, inconceivable gain and advantage: yet, there is such an aversion in human nature itself against this last and dreadful enemy, that it startles at its approach; and would willingly be excused from entering into the lists, and engaging in that sore conflict. Who ever enjoyed a greater plerophory than St. Paul; who was, even in his lifetime, caught up into the Third Heaven, and admitted as a spy into the Heavenly Canaan, the Land of Promise; who there saw and tasted the ineffable glory and joy, which was prepared for him? and, though he knew the full fruition of them could not otherwise be obtained than by dying, yet he tells us, 2 Cor. v. 4. *We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan; being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* As we find a strong antipathy working in us, and nature itself recoiling, when we are to take some bitter potion, though we be well assured the effects of it will be salutary, and that it will conduce to our health afterwards: so, even in those who are fully assured that death will be to them an inlet into everlasting life and bliss, yet there is such a natural antipathy against it, that, though the consideration of that eternal happiness into which they are

entering makes them submit to it with patience, yet they cannot but abhor and shrink from so bitter a medicine, even when it is tempered with the strong consolations of the Spirit of God.

Yea,

3. To give the highest instance that can be of the dreadfulnss of death, we find, *that even our Lord Jesus Christ himself*, in whom there were no disordered passions, no sinful fears, none of those weaknesses and follies which in us do too often serve only to increase and enhance the dreadfulnss of death; yet even he *loaths and nauseates to drink of that cup*; and prays, with all fervency and importunity, that it might pass from him: Matt. xxvi. 39. *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* And nothing, but his Father's will, was of power enough to reconcile him to it: *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Certainly, that must needs be a very direful composition, which should make Him, who was God as well as man, so averse from taking it: that must needs be a very formidable enemy, which should make Him loth to conflict, though he were sure to conquer it; and not only restore life to himself, but to all the world. Indeed, that, which made this cup so exceeding bitter to our Lord Christ, was the wrath of God, and the curse of the Law, that were tempered in it; but, yet, the very vehicle of these, death itself, and the separation of his body and soul, was in itself very unpleasant and irksome, even unto Him whose person was divine and whose nature was innocent. And, therefore, it must needs be, that death hath in it a great deal of dread and terror.

Thus we see it demonstrated, that death is a very dreadful and tremendous enemy to human nature.

ii. Let us next consider, WHAT THERE IS IN DEATH, THAT SHOULD MAKE IT THUS DREADFUL; that should make its sting so sharp and poignant, and cause such a natural abhorrency and antipathy against it in us.

And this I shall shew, in Five particulars.

1. *The harbingers, which go before it, to prepare its way.*

And these are, usually, languishing diseases, or racking pains; which, as the avant-couriers of a hostile army, commonly commit little less spoil than the whole body of it: these spend the strength and waste the comfort of life; and scarce leave any thing, besides a consumed carcase, for death to prey upon.

And, must it not needs be terrible and irksome to nature, to conflict with these scouts of death? to be cast upon the bed of languishing; restlessly tossing to and fro in the night-season, watching for the morning; and, in the day, wishing for night, and finding no ease, no refreshment in either? when a fever shall burn us to ashes; a dropsy deluge us; and, it may be, with those floods which our own intemperance hath let in, quench the vital flame and lamp of our life? And, while we are struggling for life and gasping for breath, our assisting-friends, with their officious mournings, increase, but cannot help our grief, by theirs.

2. Death is likewise dreadful, *as it deprives us of all the comforts and enjoyments of life.*

If God hath blessed thee with plenty and affluence of these temporal good things; if thou enjoyest riches, honour, friends, and whatsoever thy heart can here desire to make thy life sweet and comfortable to thee; will it not grate upon thee, to think, that shortly all these must be sequestered? Thou must be haled from the embraces of thy dearest friends, degraded of thy titles, divested of thy robes, turned out of thy possessions, and must take up thy abode in the silent chambers of darkness and corruption. These are the things, which make men loth to die. And, indeed, those, who have made them their treasures and their good things, will find it a very hard task, to be willing to leave all behind them at the mouth of the grave. They can wait upon thee no farther. And oh, what a sad parting hour will it be to the poor soul, when it must be compelled to remove into another world, and leave all its good things behind in this! how will it protract and linger! how loth will it be to enter upon so great a journey, and have nothing left to defray the charge of it! how wistly will it look back upon all those dear vanities, that it had hoarded up together! "What! cannot I carry this possession and those riches, this estate and that treasure, out of the world with me? Must we then part for ever? Yes, O soul, for ever. None of these things canst thou carry with thee." And oh, think, what a sad thing it will be for thy poor soul to be set on shore in a vast and dismal eternity, all naked and destitute; having nothing of all the superfluities and abundance of comforts, which here it made its chief good, to relieve and support it!

Or, if men's estate be low and mean in the world, exposed to many wants and miseries: yet, even to such, death is terrible;

nor can they be willingly brought to part with their share of enjoyments, though it be nothing but the common air, and dear light, and their own flattering hopes that yet they may live to possess more. For hope of better for the future, is a most tenacious thing: and those, who have nothing else to live upon, yet cannot look upon death with content; because, although it put an end and period to their present miseries, yet it likewise cuts off their hopes, in which, at least, they are as rich and happy as the greatest.

3. Another thing, which is dreadful and stinging in death, is that, which truly and properly is death itself: I mean, *the separation of those dear companions, the soul and body.*

They are, in life, knit together by an unintelligible bond of union and friendship. There is a most secret and powerful sympathy between them; and that, which is the very life of friendship, a communication of passions and affections. They have spent many years together in perfect amity and concord; and, therefore, it may well be dreadful to think of parting at the last. And,

4. *The consideration of those dishonours and disgraces, which shall befall the body upon this separation,* is likewise very stinging and irksome unto nature.

There it must lie, a sad, wan, and ghastly spectacle to thy friends, and afterwards be lodged in the bed of silence and putrefaction. There, whole heaps of worms shall crawl upon thee and devour thee: and the next corpse, that wants room, may perhaps disturb thy bones, and not allow thee so much as the quiet of death, and the peaceable possession of thy grave. Thy few remains may lie scattered about the mouth of it: and thou, who art now respected and honoured, mayst have thy only visible relics rudely and irreverently dealt with. And, certainly, there is in us all such a natural love to our bodies, that we, who think all our care and pains too little in pampering and indulging them, cannot but look upon death as a most dreadful enemy, that shall bring upon them so many contumelies and dishonours. And,

5. The most sharp and stinging consideration of all, is, *That death delivers us over into eternity, which we have ten thousand times deserved should be infinitely wretched and miserable to us.*

Our consciences do misgive, and presage very dreadful things against us; and often represent to our view all the woes and

plagues which are stored up in hell, the treasury and magazine of all plagues. And, though the former considerations render death very frightful; as it is inflicted upon us by pains and diseases; as it deprives us of all the comforts of life; as it is the separation of soul and body; as it leaves the body under the dishonours and ghastly deformities of rottenness and putrefaction: yet, had death nothing in it more dreadful than these, it might be supportable. Yea, and we know, that many, who have been borne up by the consolations of the Holy Spirit, have opened their arms to it and embraced it: though with natural reluctance, as it is death; yet, with joy and exultation, as it is to them an admission into eternal life. But, when death shall summon us to appear before the dreadful tribunal of God, and suggest to us horrid apprehensions of woe and torments that we shall by him be adjudged unto; this is that sting, which is most sharp and piercing; that sting, the poison of which affects the soul with most inexpressible anguish and agonies.

II. And this brings me to the Second Proposition, which is the very words of the text, **THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN.**

For,

i. It was only sin, that BROUGHT DEATH INTO THE WORLD.

So the Apostle, expressly: Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* This serpent owes his being, as well as his sting and poison, unto man's transgression. Indeed, Adam was no more created immortal by nature, than he was impeccable: but as he had *potentiam non peccandi*, so he had likewise *potentiam non moriendi*; a power, neither to have sinned nor died; but might have prolonged his days, either to a happy eternity here upon earth, or to a blessed translation into heaven. But, as soon as sin had gotten possession of his soul, death lays in claim to his body; and sends a numerous train of grim attendants, fear, sadness, decays, troubles, pains, and diseases, to secure him from making his escape: and, by these, we must all, sooner or later, fall into his hands.

ii. DEATH RECEIVES ITS STING AND TERRORS FROM SIN.

It is the consciousness of sin and guilt, which makes death so bitter and intolerable to us: and therefore the Apostle, Heb. ii.

15. speaks of some, *who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*: and this bondage of fear and terrors, under which they were held, was from the scorching apprehensions of that hell and everlasting wrath, which were to follow after death. And, though now, possibly, in the jollity of thy youth and health, thou puttest far from thee all such dreadful and disturbing thoughts; though, it may be, when conscience begins to recal them, thou desperately chokest it, either by the cares of the world, or intemperance, or by wicked and lewd company, or some such hellish artifice: yet, know for certain, that it will watch its advantages to return upon thee; and, it may be, represent all the horrors and dread of these things to thee, when thou art just entering into thy eternal state, to feel them. When our souls, in the very agonies of death, are just loosening themselves from those bands that tied them to the body, they will, doubtless, then make strange discoveries of those terrible things, which now, in our health, when we are any thing serious, make our hearts ache and our consciences tremble: but, then, the terrors of them will be such, as will even cramp and confound the soul; when it shall see them all come rolling upon him, and no possibility left to escape or defer them: now, they are upon the very borders and confines of that region, where ghosts and spirits are the only inhabitants: here, a holy and just God is summoning them to his bar, and passing an irreversible doom upon them: there, they see hell casting up black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched souls wallowing in them: all these dreadful things, conscience will represent to convinced sinners; and make them infinitely more dreadful, by suggesting, that they all make against them, and are the preparations of divine wrath and vengeance to punish them. Now, O Sinner! how canst thou encourage thyself? how wilt thou bear up thy heart against the thoughts and fears of death? doth it not almost kill thee, only to think, that thou must die, and then have all the wrath of the Great God executed upon thee, to eternity? death is still waiting for the forfeiture of your lives; and, after death, hell and eternal torments; torments, which shall never have end or ease: under the sharpest tortures we can suffer here, we comfort ourselves, that they will shortly wear off; but, there, your tortures shall be most exquisite, and yet have no end. It is in vain to cry, as here we do, when we are under pains or diseases, “Would to

God it were day!" or, "Would to God it were night!" for they have no rest day nor night, and none they can expect: but the smoke of their torments riseth up for ever and ever. Thus, it is the apprehension of future wrath and vengeance, as the due desert of our sins, which makes death so exceedingly terrible and stinging to a guilty soul.

III. I shall close up all with Three brief INFERENCES.

i. If sin and guilt be the sting of death, LET US BEWARE, THAT WE ADD NOT MORE POISON TO THIS STING, by adding more sins and iniquities to our past crimes.

Remember, every sin which thou committest will make thee more afraid to die. And, in what dreadful perplexities and agonies of soul wilt thou be, when thy guilt shall stare thee ruthfully in the face, and thy conscience exclaim against thee! and, yet, inexorable death will wait no longer, but cut thee off in the midst of all thy fears and horrors, and thrust thee down to hell, there to undergo more than ever thou couldst fear or imagine.

ii. If sin be the sting of death, then, certainly, THE ONLY WAY TO DISARM DEATH, IS, BY CLEANSING THYSELF FROM SIN.

Wash thy polluted soul, in the tears of an unfeigned repentance. Sprinkle thy guilty conscience, with that *blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*. Then mayst thou breathe out thy soul with comfort, when all that death can do unto thee, is, to change thy hopes into full fruition and enjoyment.

iii. HOW UNSPEAKABLY HAPPY ARE THOSE, TO WHOM THE STING OF DEATH IS TAKEN OUT BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST!

In his body, death struck his sting so deep, that he left and lost it there: and, like some venomous creatures, that die as soon as they have stung, *animamque in vulnere ponunt*, that mortally wound themselves, whenever they do less wound others; so, death, darting its whole sting into Jesus Christ, to wit, the sins of all the world that believe, which were all imputed unto him when he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, hath ever since been a harmless, disarmed thing; not able to hurt them, how grim soever its aspect be. Yea, this last

enemy is reconciled unto them, and become one of their party ; and they may, with triumph, say, as the Apostle doth, whether *life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs* ; death shall do them the greatest and most real kindness which they can receive ; for, as death was brought into the world by sin, so sin shall be abolished out of the world by death : yea, death itself shall abolish death ; and bring us into that state, where our life shall be deathless and our holiness sinless.

And this brings me to speak of the Resurrection, by which this victory over death is completed ; which will, therefore, be the subject of the ensuing discourse.

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OF THE
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OF THE

RESURRECTION

Read Gospel
Sept. 6. 1818

OF THE
RESURRECTION.

JOHN xx. 26, 27.

AND, AFTER EIGHT DAYS, AGAIN HIS DISCIPLES WERE WITHIN, AND THOMAS WITH THEM. THEN CAME JESUS, THE DOORS BEING SHUT, AND STOOD IN THE MIDST, AND SAID, PEACE BE UNTO YOU. THEN SAITH HE TO THOMAS, REACH HITHER THY FINGER, AND BEHOLD MY HANDS; AND REACH HITHER THY HAND, AND THRUST IT INTO MY SIDE: AND BE NOT FAITHLESS, BUT BELIEVING.

AMONG all the Articles of our Christian Faith, there is none, that hath suffered more persecutions from corrupt reason and seeming impossibilities, than that of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, his triumph over death, and the rescue of his body from the affronts and dishonours of the grave. For, because the improbability of the thing is so great; and the arguments, drawn from nature and reason against it, are so strong to a man, who looks no higher, and believes not that miracles interpose in the series of human affairs: therefore, a doctrine, which is so strange a paradox, as that of the Resurrection, had need have very forcible arguments to prove it, that it may be able to overbear the dissent of the world, which else will, doubtless, cry it down, as absurd and impossible.

What great prejudices and importunate objections Infidelity brings against this doctrine, I have shewn more at large elsewhere*; and that the utmost they amount to, is only to prove the supernatural almighty power of the efficient cause, and not the impossibility of the effect.

But, against these strong prejudices and plausible arguments, Christian Religion opposeth that, which neither prejudice can overbear nor yet arguments confute, the plain and evident testimony of sense.

* Discourse upon Acts ii. 24.

This chapter, of which the text is part, gives us abundant attestation of the resurrection of Christ; relating his many appearances to his disciples, who, after his death, conversed corporally with him, and who saw him perform all the functions of life, as eating, drinking, &c. which St. Augustin well saith he did, *non egestate, sed potestate*: not that he needed such weak supports; for his body was then spiritual, incorruptible, and impassible: but to shew that he was really a man, and might do it.

On the very day of his resurrection, he appeareth to Mary Magdalen, in the morning: v. 14: and, as the circumstance of the history gives us good grounds to conjecture, presently after to Peter: that these, who had been the greatest sinners and were the most passionate mourners, might first of all receive the strongest consolations, by declaring to them his absolute conquest over Death and the Devil, who had long possessed the one as his own, and almost dispossessed the other of Christ.

On the same day, about noon, he joins himself in company with two of his disciples, who were travelling to Emmaus, about seven miles distant from Jerusalem; and *expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself*. Upon their discovering him, and his disappearing from them, they speed back the same evening to Jerusalem, earnest to declare to the other disciples what had happened unto them. They find them, and divers other believers, late and secretly assembled, for fear of the Jews: and, as they are declaring the former passages, Jesus himself came *and stood in the midst* of them; and *shewed unto them his hands and his side*; and they were glad, *when they saw the Lord*: vv. 19, 20. One would think, that such a sudden surprisal as this; appearing to them unexpectedly, when they were, in all likelihood, sadly discoursing of him, and wavering between hope and doubt; might rather have affrighted and terrified, than rejoiced them. They had shut the doors, for fear of the Jews: but, whom the strong bands of death and the bars of the grave could not detain, neither could the bolts and locks of a door exclude: yet we need not here fancy any penetration of dimensions, or that Christ's body passed through the very body of the door, as some affirm, who would rather vouch impossibilities and contradictions, than be barren in inventing miracles: it was wonderful enough, to make his passage by his word and will; and an astonishing sight, to see him in the midst of them, whose entrance thither, and sudden opening

and shutting of the door, they could not perceive. Whom would it not appal, to have a person, who they knew had been dead and buried, start in upon them from the confines of the grave and the regions of darkness; especially too, at such a time, when night and the fear of their own lives, both which circumstances here concurred, might make them more apt to receive terrifying impressions? But a Revived Saviour is a reviving sight; and the confirmation, which now their faith and hope received, sweetly vanquished all the troublesome suggestions of their fear, converted their doubting into assurance, and their trembling into joy.

This is now the Fourth time, that our Saviour shewed himself alive to his disciples, on the very day of his resurrection: two of which appearances are recorded in this chapter; and the other two in Luke xxiv.

From this night-assembly Thomas is absent: the wisdom of Divine Providence so ordering it, that the occasion of his diffidence should produce a stronger argument for the establishing of our faith. He hears their story, condemns their credulity; imputes all, either to some airy ghost or spectre, or else to the melancholy illusions of their own fancies; and resolves not to be imposed upon, either by their reports, or any flitting shows and unsubstantial apparitions: *Except, saith he, I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* A most obstinate and unreasonable resolution! as if nothing were fit to be credited by us, but what we ourselves are witnesses of; and truth must make no more converts, than it hath testifiers. Well! this passeth with him a whole week; and because, in the interim, our Saviour had not appeared either to him or them, no doubt but his incredulity was mightily strengthened, and he pleased himself with the conceit of being the only wise and rational man of the whole company. But, *after eight days*, saith the text, that is, on that day sennight, being the Lord's Day, (for, *after eight days*, must not be here taken for eight days fully completed, but current: as it is said, Mark viii. 31. that, *after three days*, Christ should rise again; that is, on the third day: and, so, Luke ii. 21. When *eight days* were fulfilled, that the child should be circumcised; that is, he was to be circumcised on the eighth day; so, here, on the eighth day, after his first appearances) when they were again met in the like assembly, and Thomas now with them, Jesus came, and stood in

the midst, and said, Peace be unto you; and, then applying himself particularly to Thomas, offers to give him all the satisfaction that himself had required, to confirm the truth of his Resurrection: Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.

Wherein we may observe,

First. That though our bodies shall be raised entire and perfect, yet Christ's body, after his resurrection, retained those wounds and that solution of parts, which were caused by the nails and spear, and shall retain them for ever in heaven; now no longer dolorous in an impassible body, but as the monuments and trophies of his victory over sin and death.

For the body of Christ was, immediately after his resurrection, endowed with the same qualities that it shall for ever enjoy in heaven; except it be that radiant lustre and glory, in which it there shines, and which for a time he laid aside that he might the more familiarly converse with his disciples. Think, then, what an inestimable privilege it will be, when we shall hereafter approach in our glorified bodies unto the glorious body of our Blessed Saviour; and, as Thomas was invited to do, shall put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hand into his side, and sound the depth of those fountains, whence flowed forth his precious blood and our salvation with it.

Observe,

Secondly. The infinite kindness and condescension of our Saviour, in offering a conviction to his unbelieving disciple upon his own terms, though very bold and unreasonable ones they were.

Whether he did actually touch and search those sacred wounds, or satisfied his curiosity with the sight of his Redeemer, is not expressly recorded. Perhaps, shame and modesty checked any farther trial: which, where the object was so plain and evident, would have tended rather to his reproach than conviction; and would have as much argued his unbelief, as confirmed his faith. And this seems intimated in that mild reproof, which our Saviour gives him, v. 29. *Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they, who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Observe, likewise,

Thirdly. How wisely and graciously our Saviour accommodates his condescensions to the infirmities of his servants.

In the morning of the resurrection, when he first appeared to

Mary Magdalen, he commands her, who, in all probability, was prostrating herself to embrace his feet, not to touch him, v. 17. *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.* Her faith was sufficiently assured; and therefore a touch had been but a needless officiousness: not to be allowed by a person, who was shortly to ascend into heaven; and, whilst now on earth, yet no longer in the state of mortals, nor to be conversed with according to the laws and usances of human respects. Yet, the very same evening, when he appeared to those, who were less assured, yea affrighted, supposing *they had seen a spirit*, he bids them handle him, and see; *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*: Luke xxiv. 37, 38, 39. And, here, being to deal with one more curious and sceptical than the rest, he bids him make a critical scrutiny; and, to give him full satisfaction, submits, for the cure of his infidelity, to offer those wounds to be pierced again, which the infidelity of the Jews had made.

Observe,

Fourthly. A most irrefragable proof, both of the Humanity and Divinity of our Blessed Saviour.

The former, in that he yields himself to the trial and judgment of the most infallible of all our senses: the latter, in that, though he were bodily absent; yet, by his Immense Spirit, he heard the discourses and understood the scruples of his dissatisfied disciple; and offers him the very same conditions, verbatim, that he himself had propounded.

Observe,

Fifthly. That, though the matter of Christian Religion be sublime and mysterious above the comprehension of reason; yet its evidence is so plain, and the motives of credibility so convincing, as to be resolved into the very testimony of sense.

This is it, which I intend principally to insist on: *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*

The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, is the fundamental of all fundamentals in Christianity. Upon the truth and evidence of this depend the truth and evidence of all our religion: for, *if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain*, saith the Apostle, *and ye are yet in your sins*: 1 Cor. xv. 17.

First. Our faith would be vain, because terminated on a deceiver, who promised this; both as the complement of all his other miracles, and the seal of the truth and divinity of his

doctrine; wherein, if he had failed, the one would have been justly accounted impostures, and the other lies and falsehoods.

Secondly. We should yet be in our sins, because the propitiatory sacrifice, which he offered upon the cross, would have been of no avail to the acquitting of us from our guilt, had not Christ risen again from the dead, to apply unto us, by his Spirit, the virtue of that oblation, for our righteousness and justification.

So that the whole weight and moment of Christian Religion depends upon the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, as its only basis and support. All those mysterious truths, which either he himself taught his Church in his own person or inspired his Apostles to deliver to the Church in his name, are therefore to be received, therefore to be believed, because they are clearly attested to us by innumerable miracles wrought by him, and by virtue of his name and faith in it. For God, who is Truth itself, will never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie. And the most miraculous of all those miracles, that, which gives them the firmest obsignation that they were wrought by God, is his raising himself from the dead. So that, how abstruse soever the doctrines themselves seem to be, how unaccountable soever to the disquisition, how incomprehensible soever to the sphere and extent of our reason; yet we have still the same certain grounds to believe the most mysterious articles of our faith, as we have to believe, that he, who taught them, rose again from the dead.

I. Whence it appears, that **THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF ALL OUR RELIGION IS MADE INTO THIS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.** And, for the truth of this, our Saviour is content to leave himself to the unerring, yea infallible, judgment of human senses.

Lo here the infinite wisdom of the economy and dispensation of the Gospel! that those sublime truths, which far transcend the highest pitch of our reason, should yet be founded upon the certainty of our very senses; so that we have as much reason to believe them, as we have to believe the reality and existence of what we see, and hear, and feel. They hear his salutation: they see his person: he shews to them his hands and his side: he bids them handle and feel him; and speaks to Thomas to search his wounds: he eats, and drinks, and converses with them: and these evidences he gives, not only to single persons, but some-

times to whole multitudes of them; not in one single instance, but several times, and in several places, for forty days' continuance.

This, therefore, is the first and great thing, which Thomas was to believe, even the Resurrection of his Saviour, confirmed to him by the infallible evidence of his sense; and, upon the belief of which, depends the belief of all the mysteries of our religion.

i. Against this report, which the Gospel gives us, of the Resurrection of our Saviour, there can lie but TWO DOUBTS.

The one is, Whether the relaters of it might have had no design to delude us:

The other, Whether they were not deluded themselves.

For, if it can be evinced, that they were neither deceivers nor deceived, it is clear, in spite of all seeming impossibilities, that our Lord really and corporally rose again from the dead.

Both these, therefore, I shall endeavour to make good.

1. *As to those Atheists, who do not so much question the infallibility of sense, as the credit of the relaters:* not whether what they saw or felt were truly such as their sense dictated it to be; but whether they did, indeed, see and feel, and had the sensible trial of those things, which they give out to the world, and did not rather conspire together to revive their lost credit and their sinking religion, by reviving him, whose doctrine they embraced and whose person they admired: to persons, who may be assaulted with such doubts as these, I shall, to remove such vain surmises, offer these following considerations.

(1) Let them consider, That it is not the custom or interest of liars, to appeal unto the testimony of many witnesses, for the truth of what they assert: since it is most likely, that, among a great company and number of them, some one may be found, who, either out of honesty, interest, or weakness, may afterwards detect the fraud and all the mystery of the combination.

Had there been but one or two, to have avouched the Resurrection of Christ and asserted his appearance to them, there might have been some more colourable pretence for the Atheist to be suspicious, that they had conspired together to delude the world with fables, and reported what they never saw. But, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ was not like those apparitions of saints and angels, with which the Popish Legends

are so nauseously stuffed; vouchsafed to a solitary, melancholy monk, or two: but, at several times, to several persons; and, oftentimes, to very many of them together. St. Paul speaks of a whole cloud of witnesses; so many, as cannot leave the least surmise in the most scrupulous mind, that they should all attest his resurrection by confederacy: 1 Cor. xv. 6. *He was seen by above five hundred brethren at once; of whom, he tells us, the greater part were then alive, when he wrote this Epistle: and this famous appearance to so numerous a company may either be that mentioned Matt. xxviii. 7. where he promiseth, to meet them in Galilee; or, else, that at the Mount of Olives, when he ascended gloriously into heaven.* Now, had there been any forgery or falsehood in the joint testimony of so many hundred witnesses, doubtless, the unbelieving Jews and Heathens, who neglect no occasions to discover the defects of a hated doctrine, would have had advantage enough to detect it among some of them: for it is not reasonably to be imagined, that so many should combine together, in an unprofitable design to delude the world; or, if they should, yet that they should all persist in it to their death, without ever giving the least sign of the uncertainty and vacillation of their testimony.

(2) Suppose there had been no other witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ, but only the Eleven Apostles: yet, who is it, that would be so wicked, as to abuse mankind by forged stories, in a matter of such vast moment and consequence; especially, when they could expect no reward nor advantage by it? For, though human nature be most miserably depraved; yet we shall find few or none, that will be wicked gratis.

And, what could they propound to themselves, that might rationally be thought sufficient to induce them to such a grand cheat? Either it must be supposed to be riches; or fame; or, lastly, a barren and unprofitable design of keeping up the credit of their religion.

[1] But the First is altogether incongruous, both to their profession and practice.

For the preaching of the Gospel and a Raised Saviour, instead of enriching them, only exposed them to hunger, and thirst, and nakedness; or, to the shame of having these necessities relieved by the charity of others. Nor could they say, with that profane Pope, *Quantas divitias peperit nobis hæc Fabula Christi!* And,

[2] As for Fame, their simple and homely education, free

from the pride and ostentation of the world, could never have permitted them to undergo so many sharp miseries, only to be talked of.

Besides, what Grotius very well observes, (*De Ver. Christ. Rel.*) they could not be moved to what they did, out of a desire of fame and propagating their name and renown to after-posterities; for they did not then believe their names or memory should be long lasting: for it appears, that God, for wise ends, kept his purpose secret from them, concerning the consummation of the world; and, that they verily thought, the dissolution of all things would immediately follow upon their preaching the Gospel. It is, therefore, altogether incredible, that they should contrive to delude the world out of hope of being famous: since they thought their names should certainly die with them; or, at farthest, soon after them, in the death and last funeral of the world itself.

(3) The only supposition, therefore, that remains, is, that they feigned this story of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, only to keep up their religion, and to add a greater Confirmation and Authority to their Doctrine.

But this, likewise, is utterly absurd to imagine. For, either they did believe the doctrine and religion, which they taught, to be true; or, they did not.

[1] If they did not believe it true, yea if they did not believe it the best and the only divine and heavenly religion in the whole world, what should move them to embrace it, to the hazard of their lives; and to reject other religions, which they thought to be better, and which they knew to be safer and attended with greater worldly advantages?

Can it be conceived, that men should be so far lost to reason and that inbred principle of self-preservation, as to thrust themselves upon all the injuries of an enraged world, yea upon most certain and cruel deaths, for the maintenance of a doctrine, which they themselves knew to be false, and from which they could expect no future benefit to compensate their sufferings? Either the Atheist must suppose them to be Atheists, or not: but, if they were Atheists, it is mere madness for an Atheist, who believes no religion, to die for any doctrine or opinion; and I remember, I have somewhere read a story of one condemned for Atheism, that recanted upon that very reason: and, if they were not Atheists, but did believe a God and future rewards and

punishments, as it is most evident they did, then it were worse than madness, to die for a religion, which they knew to be false; since they could expect nothing else, but that their dying for a lie should be punished with eternal death. It is, therefore, most clear and certain, that they did believe their religion and doctrine to be true; yea, to be infinitely the best in the world.

[2] Wherefore, if they did believe their religion to be true, then it follows:

1st. That they did not join together in a design to delude and cozen the world with tales, which they knew to be false and forged. And,

2dly. If they did believe their religion to be true, they must needs also believe the Master, Teacher, and Author of it, not to have been himself a deceiver.

But, unless they had been verily persuaded, that Christ did rise again from the dead, how could they account of him otherwise than as a deceiver? for he had promised them, that, after three days, he would rise again. And, of this promise they anxiously and solicitously expected the performance, after his death: for we find, that, when the third day was come, they began to entertain sad and misgiving thoughts concerning their hopes of his being the Messiah; as we may see, Luke xxiv. 21. where the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, tell Christ a very sad story of one Jesus of Nazareth, who had been lately crucified at Jerusalem; and declare, with a seeming mixture of shame and diffidence, that they *trusted, that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, say they, to-day is the third day, since these things were done.* Certainly, if their faith began to stagger, before the time for the accomplishment of Christ's promise was fully expired, only because he had not publicly and openly appeared to them, although they had heard, as they confess, rumours from others concerning his resurrection; had he not risen at all, they would quickly have renounced their ill-grounded faith, and fallen from the profession of that new religion, as soon as they had discovered the author of it to be no better than a foul deceiver and impostor.

So that, I think, I have now made it demonstratively clear, that the Apostles, in reporting the resurrection of Christ, were not combined together, in a design of deluding the easy world.

But,

2. That they were not deluded themselves, nor imposed upon

by false appearances, imagining, that they saw Christ raised, who, indeed, lay still under the arrest of death, and the power of the grave; is that, which I am next to demonstrate to you.

And, as to this, the text, which I have read, furnisheth me with arguments enough, to convince all those, who will not on purpose turn sceptics and reject the verdict of their very senses: *He shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* What greater confirmation can be expected? I have already shewn you, that they could not conspire together to deceive the world, with reports which they themselves knew to be false; and that they were not themselves deceived, we have here the testimony of their senses: they heard his salutation, and saw his person. Most unreasonable are those men, who will disbelieve the reality and existence of those things, which they see and touch. And, although reason may possibly dispute many plausible things against the resurrection: yet we ought to resign up our reason to our faith; especially when God hath been graciously pleased to give us so great a reason for our faith, as our very sense. It is foolish and in vain, for sophistry to urge impossibilities against the joint testimony of the hand, the eye, and the ear. They heard him discourse in the same tenor, both of voice and heavenly matter, as before: they saw the same figure, lineaments, and proportion of body in him, as formerly: they observed the orifices of those wounds, which the nails and spear had made in his hands and side: they felt him breathing upon them; which, certainly, if any thing, is the most infallible evidence of life: they touched his flesh, firm and substantial as before it was: nay, one of them, too curious and scrupulous to be imposed upon by false shews or airy fantastic shapes, would not believe, unless he plunged his hand into his sacred side. Now what greater confirmation could diffidence itself have desired, to assure them, that he was really a living man? If, after all these evidences, there might yet remain any place for delusion or ground for distrust; for my part, I see not how they could be well assured, that ever there was such a man as Jesus in the world. The very same reasons, which might make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus after his resurrection, might as well make them doubt whether he were the true Jesus before his crucifixion; yea, and to doubt, whether they were

truly one another. And, why might not we as well doubt, whether or no we are men, and not rather spectres, and phantoms, and mere empty shapes and shades of men? for we have no more reason to believe, that those, whom we see before us are men, than the disciples had to believe, that Christ appeared to them after his death, a true, real, and substantial man. They had the testimony of their senses for it; and we have no more for any thing that we see or touch, here in the world. *He shewed unto them his hands and his side: and they were glad, when they saw the Lord.*

So that, put all this together, and it amounts to a most certain and undoubted proof, That Christ is indeed risen from the dead.

For,

(1) It is certain, that his disciples saw him and conversed with him, after his resurrection.

For they could not feign such a story, either for riches, or fame, or the maintenance of a religion which they thought to be false; and false it must be, if the Author of it had not risen again, as he promised.

(2) It is again most certain, that, if they heard, and saw, and touched him, and conversed long with him, and had all the testimonies of their senses to confirm it, then it was that very Jesus, who was crucified and buried, who also was raised from the dead.

For those men, who can doubt this, may as well and with as good reason doubt, whether they are men or no.

So that they were neither deceivers nor deceived: and, therefore, what they affirm in this matter, is of infallible truth and certainty.

ii. From the Scripture's appealing thus to the evidence of sense, for the truth of a fact, on which that of the whole Christian Religion depends, it is easy and natural to infer, that **WHATSOEVER DOCTRINES ARE CONTRARY TO THE PLAIN TESTIMONY OF OUR SENSES, ARE NOT ONLY FALSE IN THEMSELVES, BUT TEND TO OVERTHROW THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR RELIGION.**

For, if Christian Religion be established upon the Resurrection of Christ, and this Resurrection of Christ can no otherwise be proved but by the evidence of sense; they, who impose such doctrines as destroy the credit of our senses, do, by very

fair and necessary consequence, destroy likewise the credibility of Christian Religion.

And such is that monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, held by the Church of Rome: viz. That, in the consecration of the Holy Sacrament, the bread is really changed into the true and proper body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into his true and proper blood: a doctrine, which puts a gross affront, not only on our reason, because of the innumerable contradictions involved in it; but a most intolerable affront upon our very senses, giving the lie to all the reports which they make, and flatly telling them that they are not to be believed in what they relate concerning their proper objects.

And what is the fatal yet necessary issue of this, but that we are left under an utter uncertainty, as to all the mysteries of our faith? for, if the sense of all mankind may deceive them, we have no assurance, that either Christ lived, or taught, or wrought miracles, or died, or rose again, or ascended into heaven: for I have no more reason to believe, that the same person, who was crucified and dead, did rise again from the dead, because the disciples saw, and heard, and touched him; than I have to believe, that what he gave them at his last supper was truly bread and wine, since they saw, and touched, and tasted it as such. Their senses equally voted for both: and, if there might be a deception in the one, why not in the other?

And, so, for the sake of a rotten superstructure, we must overturn the very ground-work of faith, yea and of all certainty, unless we will very meekly suppose, that the Apostles were blessed with that wonderful privilege of discerning a human body in the shape of a loaf; or of feeling that to be flesh and blood, which yet they handled and tasted as bread and wine: a privilege, I dare say, never indulged to any Christians since their days!

And, if we cannot make any such strange discoveries, they ought not to be offended at us, though we still call that Bread and Wine, which approves itself so to all our senses; since our Blessed Saviour himself could give no stronger proof that he was himself, than by appealing to the senses of those who saw and touched him: *Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have*: Luke xxiv. 39. This he thought a sufficient proof to convince them, that he had a human body: and shall not we think it a sufficient proof, that their Wheaten God hath not a human body, when our sight, our touch, our

smell, our taste, all give in their concurrent verdict, that it hath neither flesh nor bones. We do *see*, we do *handle*, that it hath neither flesh nor bones; and, therefore, cannot be the proper body of Christ, which was crucified and raised again.

Certainly, since this doctrine of Transubstantiation baffles all those arguments, by which our Saviour himself was content that his resurrection should be tried, and the truth of all his gospel verified, we may well explode it: not only as infinitely absurd, but most blasphemous and atheistical; and such, as enervates the strongest proofs and the clearest evidences, which Christ himself could produce, that he was no deceiver.

I know, they will betake themselves to their fortress of *Hoc est corpus meum: This is my body*. "There," say they, "we have express and literal Scripture for it." But how do they, or how can we know, that there are any such words as these? is it not by our senses? either our seeing them written, or hearing them read? yea, how could the Apostles, from whose relation these words were written, know that our Saviour ever spake them? was it not because they believed their senses? and, what! shall we make them so fond, as to believe their single sense of hearing; when yet they must not, under pain of heresy, believe their several senses, of touching, tasting, and seeing? I pray, what prerogative of infallibility hath the ear above the hand, the eye, or the palate? Sure I am, that St. John, Epist. I. chap. i. vv. 1, 3. joins them equally in commission: *that.....which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life.....that.....declare we unto you*: and yet we must, contrary to the judgment of three or four of our senses concerning their proper objects, believe a doctrine, for which the only proof they have, refers us to the testimony of one of our senses; for they tell us, the words are written, and we may see them, *This is my body*. It is true, we do see them; and, therefore, believe that they are written: but, what! do we likewise see with our eyes, that the sense of them is proper and literal? We see it written, that Christ is a Rock, a Vine, a Door; and, therefore, we believe it: but is it therefore true, that he is properly all these?

Certainly, if there be any miracles wrought in the Church of Rome, the greatest of them is, that they should be able to prevail with men in their wits to believe such gross absurdities. But the subject is too grave for satire; else, the provocations to it

were very sufficient, to expose such a stupid piece of nonsense to the utmost scorn and derision.

Yet this, I think, we may very seriously assert,

1. That those, who would prove Transubstantiation by the written word, *This is my body*, do miserably invalidate the force of *their own argument*; since my sight can no more assure me, that any such words are written, than it assures me, that that is bread and wine which I receive.

2. That *we have as clear evidence of the falsehood of Transubstantiation, as any we have, or can possibly have, concerning the truth, either of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, or of any other great and important Article of the Christian Faith.* Neither have I, nor can any other man have, stronger grounds to believe, that Christ's natural body was raised from the grave, than we have to believe, that that is not his natural body, which we receive in the eucharist. Nay,

3. *It is utterly impossible, that there can be clearer evidence for the one, than for the other.* For, suppose a man should hear a voice from heaven, which should tell him, that the elements were substantially changed into the true and proper body and blood of Christ; and yet, afterwards, to his touch, his taste, his sight, his smell, they should still appear to be truly bread and wine; I would ask, whether he might not as rationally suspect his hearing concerning that voice, as three other of his chief senses, when they give in their reports concerning their proper objects, and that likewise consonant to the sense of all the rest of mankind: so that, in short, the issue is this, He, who believes Transubstantiation, hath no reason to believe any thing; for he destroys all motives and grounds of credibility.

But, it may be, the more absurd their faith is, the more merit is in it; in that they will believe things contrary to all reason, and all their senses. But let them beware also, that, by such a brutish and stubborn faith as this is, they do not destroy all possibility of the certainty of Divine Revelations (which, sure, must be made to some of our senses) and all the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, whilst they obtrude upon the faith of their credulous disciples such a monstrous figment, as utterly overthrows the credibility of all other things.

And, thus much, concerning the Prime and Fundamental Article of our Faith, the Resurrection of our Saviour, confirmed to the very senses of the Apostles.

II. But, when it is said to Thomas, *Be not faithless, but believing*; not only this, but OTHER POINTS OF FAITH, WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY BUILT UPON IT, AND BY CLEAR CONSEQUENCE DEDUCIBLE FROM IT, ARE INCLUDED.

And, therefore,

i. As, from the testimony of sense, they had all the reason in the world to believe the Resurrection of Christ; so, believing this, there is A LIKE REASON TO BELIEVE, THAT HE INDEED IS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

For, had he been a false prophet and an impostor, neither could he have raised up himself, being but a mere man; neither would God have raised him up, being but a mere deceiver. And, therefore, when the Jews called for a sign from Christ, to prove him to be the true Messiah, he still gives them the sign of his resurrection; as if a greater and more evident proof than that could neither be given nor demanded. *There shall no sign be given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth: Mat. xii. 38, 39, 40.* And so, again, when they tempted him for another sign, to prove himself the true Messiah, he instanceth in his resurrection: John ii. 18, 19. *What sign shewest thou unto us?.....Jesus answered.....Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; speaking there of the temple of his body.* So that, still, the resurrection of Christ is a most infallible sign and proof, that he is the true Messiah and Saviour of the World.

Now think, O Christian! what joy it must needs be, to have such an irrefragable testimony, that thou hast not misplaced thy faith, thy hope, and thy worship; but that that Jesus, whom thou servest, was not only shamefully lifted up upon the cross, but gloriously raised up from the grave. How would the malicious Jews have insulted over the poor disciples' credulity, if Christ had not vindicated himself from the hand of the grave; and, by the power of his Almighty Godhead, overcome death within its own territories; and, in triumph, brought back his own body, as a spoil rescued from that mighty destroyer! and, therefore, the Apostle saith, Rom. i. 4. That Christ was *declared to be the Son of God with power.....by the resurrection from the dead.*

ii. Be not faithless, but believe, that by this Resurrection of thy Saviour, of which we have such undoubted testimony, THE WHOLE WORK OF THY REDEMPTION IS COMPLETED.

This glorious action gives the last complement and perfection unto it. The full work of our redemption consists, not only in the purchase of mercy for us, but also in the application of that purchase to us. The purchase was, indeed, made by the death of Christ; in which a full price was paid down to the justice of God: but the application of this purchase to us, is made by the resurrection and life of Christ. For he applies to us the benefits of his passion, both by the prevalency of his Intercession, and by the mission of the Holy Ghost: by the former, he powerfully mediates with God to bestow them: by the latter, he effectually fits and prepares us to receive them. And both these are the blessed fruits of his resurrection and eternal life: for *he ever liveth to make intercession for us*: Heb. vii. 25: and, *being at the right-hand of God.....and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear*: Acts ii. 33. which, though occasionally spoken concerning his miraculous gifts, is yet equally true of his sanctifying graces: so, John xvi. 7. *If I depart, I will send the Comforter unto you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter....even the Spirit of Truth*: John xiv. 16, 17. There was no one prejudice, that so much hindered the Gospel from taking place upon the hearts of Jews and Heathens in the primitive times, as this of the death and cross of Christ: for believing, that he was lifted up upon the cross, but not believing that he was raised up out of the grave; their natural reason judged it folly, to expect life from him, who was not able to preserve or restore his own. Indeed, it were folly thus to hope, did not his life apply what his death merited; our salvation being begun upon the cross, but perfected upon the throne. The loss of his life would never have procured life for us, but that, as he laid it down with freedom, so he resumed it again with power: *I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again*: John x. 18. Indeed, it was his life and resurrection, that put virtue and efficacy into his death and passion: and, hence it is, that the Apostle seems to speak of the Resurrection and Intercession of Christ as having a greater influence into our justification, than his death and sufferings: Rom. viii. 34. *Who is he, that condemneth? It is Christ that died, μαλλον δε, yea rather, that is risen again.....who also*

maketh intercession for us: as if this were a surer foundation for our faith and comfort, than his death and passion. And, Rom. v. 10. *We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, πολλῶ μᾶλλον, much more.....we shall be saved by his life*: reconciliation is made by the death of Christ, but the actual application of this is by his life. In respect of merit, it is wrought out for us by his death: in respect of efficacy, it is only applied to us by his life.

And, therefore, we find, that all the great benefits which Christ hath purchased for us by his death, are, by the Scripture, ascribed likewise to his life and resurrection. As,

1. *Pardon of Sin.*

1 Cor. xv. 17. *If Christ be not raised.....ye are yet in your sins*; i. e. under the condemning guilt of them.

2. *Justification of our Persons.*

Rom. iv. 25. *He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.* If he had not risen from the dead, he could not have justified us, because he himself had not been justified. He was, saith the Apostle, *justified in the Spirit*: 1 Tim. iii. 16. that is, by the Almighty power of the Spirit that quickened him; or, else, by retaking his soul and spirit again unto him. If our Surety had still lain under arrest, the debt had not been satisfied; and, therefore, neither could we have been acquitted. But, being declared just by his resurrection, and discharged out of the prison of the grave, he now justifies us by the merit of his obedience and suffering.

3. *Our future Inheritance of Life and Glory* is, likewise, ascribed to the Life and Resurrection of Christ.

John xiv. 3. *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that, where I am, there ye may be also*: and, v. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also*; i. e. because I shall for ever live interceding for you, therefore shall ye for ever live with me in glory.

Thus, you see, that all the great and spiritual benefits, which redound to believers by the death of Christ, do equally redound to them by his resurrection and life; and, that there is no part of our redemption, but it receives its obsignation and validity, as well from the glories and triumphs of his life, as from the shame and ignominy of his death. So that what the Apostle saith, Rom. xiv. 8. *Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's*; we may happily invert, and say,

Whether the Lord liveth, he liveth for us; or, whether he dieth, he dieth for us: whether, therefore, he live or die, he is ours: for him either to live or die, is our gain and advantage.

Since, then, we have such undoubted assurance, that our Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, we may be as firmly assured, that the great end, both of his death and of his resurrection, is fully accomplished; which is the Redemption of fallen and lost mankind, and the Justification of all that believe in his name.

iii. Be not faithless, but believe, that the Resurrection of Christ is A MOST CERTAIN PLEDGE OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL GLORY.

Certainly, since the Head is raised, the Members shall not alway sleep in the dust. But, as Christ's natural body was raised, so shall also his mystical; and every Member of it shall be made for ever glorious, with a glorious and triumphant Head. He is risen before, to pluck us out of our graves: and then shall our vile bodies be made like unto his glorious body; bright as the sun, impassible as angels, and quick as the motions of light. And, shall this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality? shall the womb of the grave bring forth, and death itself give up the ghost? shall the soul be immediately heightened into its happiness, and the body only lie down in its bed of earth, and there sleep away a short night of oblivion? shall both soul and body enjoy a posthumous union, and all mankind everlastingly survive their own funerals? *Where, then, is thy sting? O death! O grave! where is thy victory?* what is there so terrible in this king of terrors? We may justly use the speech, without the presumption of Agag, *Surely, the bitterness of death is past.* Our souls shall as certainly meet our bodies with vital embraces, as the soul of Christ did his; and these eyes of ours shall behold our Blessed Redeemer, whose Resurrection is both the cause and the pattern of ours. Oh think, what a ravishing sight it will be, to see the Lord in his body: that body, which was buffeted, which was crucified, which was raised for thee; and, through whose resurrection and glory, thou also art raised and glorified. Think, what unspeakable joy it will be, when thy body and thy Saviour's shall be alike. Think, what an infinite advancement, when thy soul shall not only be like the angels, but thy very body shall be like thy God's. And, though it must first be

crumbled into dust, and undergo many dishonourable changes; yet know, that the grave is a safe repository, and death a responsible debtor. They shall give account for every dust entrusted to them: and, then, that, which fell a clod, shall rise a star: our cottage shall be turned into a palace, our ruins rebuilt into a glorious temple. And, if the hand of death take us asunder, it is but as we use to do with our watches, to make them clean, and then put them together again; that our body may be a glorious instrument, and a glorious habitation, for a glorified soul.

But, before we take possession of this glorious inheritance, we have yet another stage to pass through, after those of our death and resurrection: and that is, the Last Judgment; the subject of my next discourse.

OF THE
LAST JUDGMENT.

OF THE
LAST JUDGMENT.

OF THE
LAST JUDGMENT.

2 COR. v. 10.

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST;
THAT EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN HIS BODY,
ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR
BAD.

I DOUBT not, but, at the reading of these words, some may
be struck with terror, and some affected with prejudice: some,
to think how dreadful, others, how common a truth, I am now
about to treat of.

Common doctrines are like common mercies; the most useful,
and yet the most slighted. What more necessary, than the
common air and light? and, yet, because God hath made no
distinction in his distribution of these, but a beggar may breathe
as pure air and see as clear light as a prince; therefore are they
despised, and accounted rather a debt of nature than an effect of
mercy: that alone is esteemed great, and bears a value, which
but a few enjoy.

Now, though this be a most absurd judgment, which we pass
upon God's mercies; yet are we altogether as absurd and irra-
tional, in judging of his truths. Singular notions, which but a
few understand, and have not overmuch of sense and perhaps
but too much of error in them, are cried up by men of itching
ears and unstable minds, as the admired truths of the age. That
is grown despicable, which every body knows.

And, as for those stale and old-fashioned truths, of Death and
Judgment, Heaven and Hell, professors, now-a-days, learnt them
once in their catechisms, and perhaps never thought of them
since. These are such things, which, while we reason with them
of, they already know; yea and, I believe, some, with Felix,
may tremble at them too.

And, so, what from those, who despise them, because common; and those, who hate them, because dreadful; it is the hardest matter in the world, for such doctrines as these, to sink either into men's affections or attentions.

But, whoever you are that read this, I beseech you, think with yourselves, what affections it would move, should you now hear the sound of the last trump; should you feel the dead, that lie here buried, begin to stir and heave under you; should you see here a tomb-stone removed and there a grave thrown open, here a head and there an arm, here one limb and there another, thrust out of the earth; the throng and multitude of some already risen, some just rising, and all hastening to judgment: would not such a spectacle as this, fright you into more serious thoughts, than perhaps the most of you have, even when you are in God's presence? "What security have I for my soul? what interest in my Saviour? what account can I give unto my Judge? Oh! what sentence shall I hear, by and by, pronounced upon me?" Thus, would you all, with amazed and trembling hearts, expect the issue of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which now you put far away from you; and, it may be, much farther in your own thoughts, than God hath done in his decrees. Well, Sirs, stir up the same affections now: you will not be much deceived, if you think you hear and see these things present before you this hour: there are but a few years, that make a difference between what is and what shall be: and, when they are struck off, death, and judgment, and eternity, are really present with you; as really present, as the things you behold with your eyes. Could we but keep that sound always in our ears, which St. Jerome witnesseth, was always loud in his, *Surgite, mortui, &c. Arise, ye dead, and come away to judgment*: the Judge is set, the books are opening, doom is passing: how would this nip all our carnal jollity and childish pride; and make us careful to improve that time, to employ those talents, to regulate those thoughts, those discourses, those actions, for which we must, shortly, give so narrow an account to a most strict and impartial Judge?

This apprehension, the Apostle tells us, was it, that made him both so earnest in pressing the exercise of holiness upon others, and so laborious in the practice of it himself. Touching others, he tells us, v. 11. *Knowing these terrors of the Lord, we persuade men*: touching himself, v. 9. *We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of God*: so to please him

by holiness and obedience, that, whether in our voyage or in our haven, whether in this world or in the next, we may be loved by him, and accepted.

And, why all this care and circumspection? why should this be the end of all his actions, and the only thing in the world he resolves to mind? There is good reason for it: shortly we must be judged by him; and, therefore, it is but needful to study now to please him: *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ*, to receive according to what we have done, *whether it be good or bad*.

In handling this most awful and tremendous point of religion, I shall not answer those nice and uncertain questions; Where is the Place? or, When shall be the Time of this Great Judgment? Neither of these hath God clearly revealed in his word.

As for the Place, the Jews think, that this great and last assize shall be held in *the Valley of Jehoshaphat*, near Jerusalem; according as they expound Joel iii. 2: others, on the whole surface of the earth: others, *in the air*, from 1 Thess. iv. 17. where the Apostle speaks of our being taken up to meet Christ *in the air*. And this, indeed, I judge to be the most probable: both because it is most capacious to contain so great a multitude, as all nations, and languages, all families, and persons, that ever lived in the world, amount unto; and, also, because, in the Resurrection, men's bodies shall become incorruptible and spiritual: 1 Cor. xv. from v. 42. to v. 45, that is, they shall be endowed with refined and spiritual qualities, of impassibility and agility, whereby, possibly, they may move more freely, in the air, than now they do upon the earth. But these are only conjectures.

And, concerning the Uncertainty of the same, Christ hath told us, *Of that day and hour* (and it is as true, of that month and year) *knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only*: Matth. xxiv. 36. Nay, our Saviour tells them, Mark xiii. 32. that he himself knew it not; nor men, nor angels, no, nor the Son: that is, as the Son of Man he knew it not; but, as he is the Son of God, so all things are known unto him; being one in essence, and equal in knowledge, with the Father.

Omitting, therefore, these uncertainties; there is a Twofold

Day of Judgment: the one, particular; the other, universal: the one, of the soul only, presently after Death; the other, both of soul and body united together, presently after the Resurrection.

First. There is a Particular Day of Judgment, that follows immediately after every man's Death.

There is no such thing as a neutral state of the soul; a state, wherein it is neither happy nor miserable; a state of slumber, wherein, as some men dream, it sleeps away the time until the Resurrection, without sense either of pain or comfort. *We know*, saith the Apostle, *that if this earthly house.....be dissolved*, that is, as soon as it is dissolved, *we have.....a house.....eternal in the heavens*: 2 Cor. v. 1. and, which is a convincing and demonstrative argument, the Apostle Phil. i. 23. desires *to depart hence, and to be with Christ*. Should his soul have been kept from Christ till the Day of Judgment, what reason was there for him to desire death; since his very desire of death was only for this end, that his soul might the sooner enjoy Christ? for, if his soul must have slept with his body till the Resurrection, whether he had died sooner or later, or not died at all, but lived to the very end of the world, it had been all one, as to his enjoyment of Christ. So the Wise Man also, Eccl. xii. 7. *The dust*, that is, the body, *shall return to the earth.....and the spirit*, that is, the soul, *shall return unto God, who gave it*: it shall return to him, that so it may receive its sentence from him; either a sentence of absolution, according to our faith and obedience; or of condemnation, according to our unbelief and impenitence. We are apt to look upon the Day of Judgment as afar off; some hundreds, or, it may be, thousands of years hence; and think it will never overtake us: be it so: yet, certainly, thy Day of Judgment is near at hand; and what relief is it, that the Last Day shall not be till some hundreds of years hence, if yet thy soul must lie in hell all those years under insupportable torments? How know we, but that death may be now striking us, the worms may be now expecting us, our bell may be now tolling, our grave now digging? Howsoever, doubtless these things will shortly be: shortly we shall all breathe our last, and give that gasp that will discharge our souls from our bodies; and then is our Judgment Day. And, Oh! what strange discoveries will that last moment make! we shall there see, what we have heard and believed of eternity here: sentence will be instantly pronounced, while the soul is as yet warm from the

body: and, accordingly, either angels will wing it away into Abraham's bosom, to heaven, the seat of eternal joy; or devils, who are present about sick-beds, watching for their prey, will drag it down to eternal torments. And, according to the sentence passed upon every soul in this particular judgment, so shall they have the foretastes and essays, either of happiness or misery; in which the whole man, both soul and body, must abide for ever. This is the First Judgment-Day.

Secondly. There is an Universal Judgment. And this is to begin presently after the Resurrection.

The former judgment proceeded according as death, God's grim serjeant, arrested such and such a particular soul, and brought it before him: but, here, all, who ever have been or shall be in the world, shall, together, stand before Christ's tribunal, to receive their doom; and that not only naked souls, but soul and body united. There is but one time, when heaven and hell shall be quite empty of souls; and that is, at the Resurrection: for, before God proceeds to judgment, he will first set the gates of heaven and hell wide open, and send out the whole multitude of souls, each to find its own body: one meets it with joy and embraces; the other, with curses: it curseth itself: it curseth those members, into which it must now again enter; those members, which were once instruments of sin, and must be always partners with it in torments. Both righteous and wicked, all alike, must appear in their bodies: and, though they do, beforehand, know themselves to be either acquitted or condemned; yet this is the time for the solemn and conspicuous pronouncing of the sentence, and distribution of rewards. It is remarkable, that the Scriptures do point out that Great Day to us, as the time, wherein mercy and forgiveness, rest and refreshing, joy and gladness, redemption and salvation, rewards and crowns, shall be bestowed upon God's children; and, on the contrary, wrath, and destruction, and everlasting vengeance, shall be executed upon the wicked: not to heap up places, see both of these, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7, 8. *It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and, to you, who are troubled, rest with us:* but when must this two-fold recompence be made? *when the Lord Jesus, saith the Apostle, shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, nor obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:* so Luke xiv. 14. *Thou shalt be recom-*

pensed at the resurrection of the just : what ! not before ? yes, as soon as the soul parts from the body, it receives its recompence : but, because the great and solemn time of retribution is the Day of Judgment, when God will manifest his justice to all the world, angels and men ; therefore, the Scriptures ascribe rewards and punishments to this day.

Now, in farther treating on this subject, I shall insist upon these general heads :

The Certainty of a future judgment.

Who it is, that is appointed then to be the Judge.

Who shall be Assessors on the bench, and Assistants in the Judgment.

The Apparatus, the Manner and Method, of the whole transaction.

Who they are, that shall be judged.

What they shall be judged for ; and what Account they must give.

According to what Law they shall be judged.

The Witnesses, that shall appear against them.

The Pleas and Excuses, which the accused will then make for themselves ; and the Invalidity of them.

The Proportioning of the Sentence, according to what hath been here done in the body, whether good or bad.

I. I shall begin with the CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

That there shall be a judgment to come, is both certain and necessary. This great and terrible day of the Lord will come, and will not tarry. God's hand is continually turning over our days and years, like the leaves of a book : there is something written on every one of them : the last is coming ; and that, like the index or table, must give account of all the rest. There must be a Last Day, as there was a First : and this Last Day will bring to public view and knowledge, whatsoever hath been done all the days which the world hath stood.

This is clear, both from Scripture-evidence, and likewise from Rational Grounds and Arguments.

The Scripture is both plentiful and express, that there shall be such a general, such a solemn and dreadful judgment. We have a full description given of it by our Saviour, Matth. xxv. 31, &c. *The Son of Man.....shall sit upon the throne of his glory,*

attended with angels; all nations standing before him, whom he will separate, some on his right-hand to everlasting life, and some on his left-hand to unquenchable fire. So, Luke viii. 17. There is nothing hid, which shall not be revealed: and when revealed, but in that *day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ?* As it is, Rom. ii. 16. so, in the 14th and 15th verses of Jude, *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgment upon all:* and many other places too long and numerous to be here related.

And, beside Scripture, Reason also itself doth clearly shew, that there shall be a future judgment, in which God will render to every man according to his works.

i. This appears from THE ACCUSING OR EXCUSING OFFICE OF CONSCIENCE.

Whence proceeds that regret, those gnawings and stings of conscience, for sin, which sometimes the very worst of men feel? but that every man doth, as it were, naturally presage, that there shall be a Day of Judgment, wherein those sinful actions shall be brought to an account, and they punished for them? Even the consciences of Heathens themselves, who never had the light of the Scripture to reveal to them the Judgment of the Last Day, would witness against them, disquiet, and trouble them, when they sinned against their natural light: their conscience would bear witness, and their thoughts accuse, or else excuse them; as the Apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 15: now what was it that could trouble their consciences, but only some secret hints and obscure notions of a judgment and wrath to come? We find them all strongly possessed with the apprehensions of a future state, in proportion to their present actions; hence, their *Barathrum* and *Elysium*, their Hell and Paradise: hence, their three severe and impartial judges: hence, their strange invented punishments, bearing a correspondence to the crimes of those who were said to undergo them; which though they were but the fictions of their poets, yet the very consent of nature and of nations dictated, that there were torments to be suffered, according to the sins here committed. The very workings of natural conscience, therefore, strongly prove, that there shall be a judgment.

ii. This too may be evidently proved, from THE EQUITY AND

JUSTICE OF GOD'S NATURE, COMPARED WITH THE SEEMINGLY STRANGE AND UNEQUAL DISPENSATIONS OF HIS PROVIDENCE.

Justice obligeth to do good, to those, who are good; and to inflict evil, upon those, who are evil. But, yet, Providence, in this life, seems to dispense affairs quite otherwise: whatsoever this world calls good, the riches, the power, the glory of it, are usually heaped upon wicked men, who swagger and flaunt it here, and fight against God with those very weapons which he puts into their hands; whereas, many of those, who are truly holy and the sincere servants of God, are oftentimes pinched by poverty, persecuted causelessly, opposed unjustly, despised and trampled upon, by every one who will but take the pains to do it. This is God's usual dealing and method with men, in this world. And it seemed so unjust and unequal, that hereupon, alone, many of the ancient Heathens denied, that the world was governed by Providence. What! can I think, that a just God rules the world, when I see a wicked Dives feasting in purple, carousing on the tears of widows mingled with the blood of orphans? and a godly Lazarus, all naked and sore and hunger-starved, lying prostrate at his gate; an object so miserable, as needed even the charity of the very dogs that licked him? here a grandee, a great and potent man in the world; and yet a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean wretch, a hater of God and goodness: another, perhaps, wandering about in a forlorn and destitute condition; and yet a saint, truly loving and fearing that God who afflicts him? And can there be equity in such an administration of affairs as this? It is true, indeed, that this were a charge hardly answerable, were this world the only place of dispensing out rewards and punishments. There is, therefore, a judgment to come: and then, *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for he shall eat the fruit of his doings; but, Woe unto the wicked! then, it shall be ill with them; for the reward of their works shall be given them: Isa. iii. 10, 11.* This shall be the day, wherein God will clear up the equity of his justice, in all the inequality of his providence. And what, then, are all the fine and gay things of this world? believe it, a poor saint, who hath on him the robe of Christ's righteousness, will be found much better clothed than ever Dives was, with all his purple. What will it avail this and that gallant, that they have here ruffled and ranted it in this world? alas! they have already received their good things. Now come the afflicted, the distressed, the derided saints, to inherit the kingdom; when poten-

tates and nobles, the great and mighty ones of the earth, shall be thrust down, screeching and howling and struggling, but all in vain, down, down to the lowest hell. Now, O Christian! is God unjust, because he suffers the wicked to flourish, and the godly to be afflicted, in this world? Beware how thou judgest God, till God hath judged men: and then thou shalt see, that all his dispensations, though now they seem very unequal, are yet tempered with most exact justice and equity.

This is the First General, which I propounded to be enquired into: the Certainty of the Future Judgment, demonstrated both from Scripture and Reason.

II. The JUDGE, before whom we must all appear, and by whom the sentence of life or death eternal must be pronounced upon all, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scripture assigns the giving of judgment upon all, chiefly unto Him: not so, as to exclude God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost: for it is a known rule, That whatsoever action God doth without himself, is common to all the Trinity. As the whole Trinity created the world, yet creation is particularly ascribed unto Christ; so the whole Trinity shall judge the world, and yet this passing of judgment is peculiarly attributed unto Christ. And that, both because it is most fit, that he, who was judged by men, should himself be the judge of men; and, also, because his authority will be then most visible and conspicuous before the whole world. Neither the Father nor the Spirit will make any visible appearance; but the Son shall then sit upon the Throne of his Majesty; and the whole world shall see him in that very body, that was buffeted, that was crucified, that was pierced, and, at last, glorified. Therefore, he is said to be the judge both of the quick and dead, because sentence shall proceed out of his mouth, and his presidency and authority shall be most remarkable. So, John v. 27: *He hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* Acts x. 42: *He hath commanded us....to testify, that it was Christ, who was ordained of God to be the Judge both of quick and dead.* 2 Tim. iv. 1: *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead.* Acts. xvii. 31: *God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world.....by the Man, whom he hath ordained.*

And, if Christ be ordained Judge, then,

i. WHAT TERROR SPEAKS THIS TO WICKED MEN!

Certainly, this must needs be a dark and gloomy day to them. It is that Christ, whose laws they have broken, whose love they have slighted, whose blood they have spilt, nay whose blood they have trampled on, whose members they have massacred and martyred; it is that Christ, who must then judge them: whom they have contemptuously refused to be their King and Saviour, they shall not be able to refuse from being their Judge. And can you then wonder, that they should call for rocks and hills to fall upon them, and hide them *from the wrath of the Lamb*? Rev. vi. 15, 16: believe it, rocks and hills, the hardest and the heaviest things in nature, would be but a light coverlet to them, in comparison with that wrath, which shall sit insupportably heavy on them for ever, and sink them down to the bottom of hell. Christ comes now to you as a Saviour, in a meek and winning manner: he urgeth you, by all the arguments that love and pity can use: but, if you refuse him, his next coming will be as a Judge; and then the Lamb, which offered himself a sacrifice for you, will turn Lion, and sacrifice you to his wrath and justice. Now, the voice of a loving Saviour calls sinners to come unto him; but those, who will not come, the voice of a dreadful Judge will then bid to depart from him: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*

ii. WHAT UNSPEAKABLE COMFORT IS THIS TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD, that Christ shall be their judge!

That Christ, in whom they have believed, whom they have loved, on whom they have trusted: that Christ, who hath dearly loved them, and given his life to redeem them, he shall judge them. And dost thou think, O believing soul! that that Christ, who hath shed his blood to save thee, will ever spend his breath to damn thee? Will the head execute the members? When the Devil brings in his accusations, when justice calls for vengeance, then the Judge himself will be your Advocate: Christ himself will plead for you. "The law of grace is, *Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* Behold my blood, and their faith. The law is satisfied, the inheritance is due. And, therefore, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from before the foundation of the world.*"

III. Consider who shall be the ASSESSORS.

As in human judicatories, besides the judge, there are the justices, who, for the more solemnity, sit on the bench with him: so, in this Great and Last Assize, besides Christ, the Judge both of Quick and Dead, there are his assessors on the bench, his assistants in the judgment: and they are the saints; 1 Cor. vi. 2. *Know ye not, that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world must be judged by you, &c.* so, Jude, vv. 14, 15, *The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgment upon all.*

i. They must, first, be judged themselves; and, then, JUDGE OTHERS.

The blessed and joyful sentence must first be pronounced upon them; and then they, as triumphant members, will be associated with their Glorious Head, in passing a dreadful and condemning sentence upon all the rest of the world, both men and devils.

1. They shall judge *the very Devils themselves.*

Know ye not, that we shall judge the angels? saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 3. that is, those *angels, which kept not their first station, but.....are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*: Jude ver. 6. Here is the consummate victory of the saints. They now subdue the Devil, as an enemy: then, they shall judge him, as a malefactor. They shall be revenged upon him, for all those horrid injections, violent temptations, and black and despairing apprehensions, with which he continually molests them. What exceeding joy will it be, when those poor weak saints, who were here, on earth, in perpetual dread of him and danger from him, shall sentence him to the same damnation, into which, by his wiles and power, he laboured to bring them. Now, he strongly tempts us to sin; and, if he prevail, he maliciously accuses us for yielding: but this is our happiness, that our tempter, our accuser, shall never be our judge. The time of recompence is coming: and then we shall accuse this great accuser, and complain of all the wrongs and injuries that he hath done us; what blasphemous and atheistical thoughts, what foolish and hurtful lusts, he hath stirred up in us, which were our trouble and his guilt. And, not only shall we thus accuse and complain, but we shall condemn him too; condemn him to that fire and those torments, which his very tempting of us will make far more raging and intolerable for ever.

2. They shall judge *all the Wicked and Ungodly of the World.*

Oh! what strange amazement will seize all hearts on that day,

when a few poor, despised creatures, who were thought no better of than the dung and dregs of nature; when these shall sit in state, and daunt all the great and gallant spirits of the world with a frown, and damn them with a word! Believe it, Paul will then make his judge Felix tremble, once more, at him. Let wicked men seriously consider of it: they must appear shivering before those saints, whom they hate and scorn now. Pilate himself, who once judged Christ, shall, at this day, be himself judged before the meanest servant of Christ. And it is sadly to be feared, that the great and honourable nobles of the world will there find but few of their peers to judge them: no; *God hath chosen the mean things of this world, to confound the... mighty.* And, before these, all persons and causes must come. And, oh! think how dreadful it will be, that Thou, perhaps, shalt be sentenced to hell by thy poor neighbour; and Thou, by thy acquaintance and familiar: here, children pronounced damned by their parents, and parents by their children; husbands and wives by their yoke-fellows: and, though once so dearly loved, so nearly related, yet now sent down to hell by them, without the least yearning of compassion towards them; yea, with shouts and triumph. Thus shall the saints judge the world, both Devils and Wicked Men.

ii. But, yet, THEY SHALL NOT SO JUDGE THEM, AS CHRIST SHALL, BY AN AUTHORITATIVE PRONOUNCING OF THE SENTENCE UPON THEM.

But,

1. They are said to judge the world, *because judgment shall pass upon all men, according to the Truth of that Doctrine, which they have taught and delivered.*

Now, though the instructions and admonitions, which private Christians have given wicked men, shall rise up in judgment against them at the Last Day; yet this sense is more peculiar to the Prophets, Apostles, and faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ, who, of all men, shall be most especially employed in this judging work. Thus Christ tells his disciples, Matt. xix. 28. *Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel:* that is, they shall, at last, be judged according to that doctrine you have preached to them and taught among them. Yea, we must distinguish between Christ's judging as a Prophet, and his judging as a King: Christ will, both ways, judge at the Last Day; by his authority as a King, and by his ministry as a

Prophet: and therefore he tells us, John xii. 48. *The word, that I have spoken, the same shall judge them at the last day: i. e. it shall rise up in judgment against them.* So, St. Paul, Rom. ii. 16. *God shall judge the hearts of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel: i. e. according to those gospel truths, which I have preached.* Little do secure sinners think, when they come to the ordinances out of mere fashion and custom, that they then hear that word, which must determine their eternal state and condition: believe it, that word, which they either drowse away or scoff at, the same word of truth must judge them, at the Last Day. Never will there be such a repeating of sermons, as then: sermons, heard many years a-gone and quite forgotten, shall then be called fresh to mind; and, what the minister spake weakly, perhaps, and faintly, conscience will then repeat in a voice more loud and dreadful than thunder. And, oh! what a sad thing will it be for ministers to see most of their flocks standing there among the goats, and to be called forth by Christ to witness against such and such of their auditors! Christ will bid us name the texts and repeat the sermons, which brought home convictions and terrors to their consciences, for those sins, which yet we could never persuade them to repent of and forsake. The drunkard, the swearer, the unclean person, the sabbath-breaker, are sinners thick-set in every parish. Now, what should we do? If we reprove them not, if we warn them not to flee from the wrath to come, we bring their blood upon our own heads, and destroy ourselves: if we do threaten and exhort and admonish them, and they repent not; their damnation will be sevenfold deeper in hell, than if they had never enjoyed means nor ministry; because they now add contempt of the Gospel to their breach of the Law. It is a very sad thing, yet so it must be, that ministers must stand forth for the condemnation of those, for whose salvation they have studied, and prayed, and laboured to the very utmost. That is one way, how the saints shall judge the world, viz. by their Teaching and Doctrine.

2. They shall judge the world, *by the Example of their Lives and Conversations.*

Then, O Sinner! will be seen their faith, and thy unbelief; their repentance, and thy impenitence; their obedience, and thy rebellions: and the good in them shall judge the evil in thee; and that is the reason, why wicked men do so hate it. God will, on that day, set a saint against a sinner: and, how

glorious will the one appear! how ugly and loathsome the other! both are alike, by nature: both may live under the same means of grace: and yet, he, truly fearing God; thou, a despiser of God: he, a sincere professor of holiness; thou, a bitter hater of it: he, conscientious in all duties, which concern both God and man; thou, a swearer, a drunkard, a lewd profane wretch, that neither fearest God nor regardest men: and, therefore, he shall be thy judge. Nay, not only the examples of saints, but the examples of those too, who have been less vicious among wicked men themselves, shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them: the moral virtues of Heathens shall serve for the lessening of their own, and the greatening of the condemnation of others, who have not arrived to their pitch: thou art called a Christian, and thinkest that name enough to pass thee at the day of trial; but, what wilt thou say, when God shall produce many Heathens better than such Christians? their temperance and sobriety shall judge thy excess and riot; their uprightness and justice, thy fraud and deceit: and all the privilege, which thou shalt get by being a Christian, is only to lie the lower and hotter in hell: our Saviour tells us, Luke xi. 31, 32. *The queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh*, who, for ought we know, were never otherwise than idolatrous Heathens, yet they shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them.

3. The saints shall judge the world, *by giving their Consent and Approbation to that most righteous Sentence of Condemnation, which Christ shall pronounce against them.*

When Christ shall say to the goats on his left-hand, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*; the saints also shall shake their hands at them, and echo it after him, *Go, ye cursed*: and subscribe, that he is just and righteous, in damning all the unbelievers in the world, though many of them may be their own parents, or children, or friends, or nearest and dearest relations.

iii. And, if the saints must thus judge the world; then,

1. *See here the mistaken judgment, which the world passeth upon them.*

It counts them a company of poor silly souls, who have more honesty and less wit, by half, than needs. They are jeered and abused, persecuted and wronged, on all hands; and, if any forbear them, it is more out of scorn than love. Well, be it so: shortly, this jolly and frolic world will find itself much

mistaken, when it shall see these despised ones advanced on the bench as assessors with Christ, and princes and potentates stand trembling at the bar as guilty malefactors.

2. Must the saints judge the world? *how much, then, doth it behove them to be careful, that they do not commit the same crimes themselves, for which they must hereafter judge others!*

This consideration should be exceedingly effectual with all those, who pretend to be saints and hope to judge the world, to exercise a singular holiness, and live quite otherwise than the world doth. And yet, who, almost, is there, that doth not hope to be among the judges, at the Last Day? Ask the drunkard or swearer, ask the profanest wretch that comes to church, "Do you hope to be saved?"—"To be saved! God forbid, else. It were pity I should live, if I had not hopes to be saved." And canst thou, who tearest the holy name of God with fearful oaths and curses, think thyself a fit man to judge swearers to hell? Canst thou, who sittest swilling till wine and strong drink inflame thee, be fit to judge drunkards to hell? Canst thou, who wallowest in thy uncleanness, be fit to sit with God as a judge upon whoremongers and adulterers? Certainly, if such as these be the judges, who shall be the guilty? The Apostle thought it a most absurd thing, that men should pretend to teach the Law, and yet transgress it: Rom. ii. 21. *Thou, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?* so may I say, Thou, that hopest to judge others, judgest thou not thyself? Thou, that hopest to judge stealers, and liars, and adulterers, and blasphemers, and the whole rabble-rout of sinners; wilt thou steal, and lie, and commit adultery, and blaspheme, and be as bad as the worst of men? Certainly, such hopes are utterly in vain; and, instead of being judges of others, such men shall find themselves condemned and executed as malefactors, at that day.

And, thus much, concerning the Third General propounded, who shall be the Assistants in the Judgment.

IV. The next general propounded, was, to give a brief description of the APPARATUS; the Manner and Method of the whole transaction.

And this, indeed, shall be unspeakably glorious and majestic. Every thing in it shall be so ordered, as may make most for the terror of the wicked, and the joy and glory of the godly.

i. CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGMENT SHALL BE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED.

The world shall be secure; and think of no such thing, as a Day of Judgment. Every one shall be minding other matters: some, their trades; and some, their pleasures: and some, too, shall be sinning, when the last trumpet shall sound to judgment. Oh! how fearfully will men then be surprized! Some will be howling, and some praying; and, before they have spoken another word, be changed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*; and then away through the air, to meet Christ in the clouds.

ii. For, THERE SHALL HIS THRONE BE SET, AND THERE SHALL ALL EYES BEHOLD HIM, IN THAT VERY BODY WHICH HE ASSUMED FOR US.

Acts i. 11. *This same Jesus, which is taken from you up...into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* His First Coming, to save the world, was mean and contemptible; but his Second Coming, to judge the world, shall be with the greatest glory and splendor that heaven can make. He shall set out of heaven *with a shout*, given by all the hosts of heaven: 1 Thess. iv. 16. He shall come *in flaming fire*, attended *with his mighty angels*: 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. And all this, to strike terror into the hearts of wicked men, who shall have so great a Judge to condemn them; and to fill the hearts of his own with joy, who shall have so glorious a Redeemer to save them.

iii. He SHALL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS, to assemble all nations and persons before him.

These are such officers, as none can resist, none can fly from. They will come into the very graves to you; throw off your earthy covering; drag out, and drive all the wicked of the earth, though loth and struggling, by whole herds, unto the Judgment-Seat.

iv. And, there, Christ SHALL MAKE A SEPARATION between them.

The sheep, i. e. those who have heard his voice, and been obedient to him, the Chief Shepherd of their Souls, he will place, visibly, on his right-hand, in a select company, by themselves: the goats, those who have followed the bent of their own lusts and wills, shall be pounded in together, on his left-

hand. Both companies expect the passing of the last and definitive sentence upon them: the one, with infinite joy and exultation, the sentence of their admission into eternal happiness; the other, with inconceivable horror, the sentence of eternal wrath. According to this different sentence, so shall presently follow its different execution: the reprobates shall be driven away by angels, and dragged away by devils; and, whether they will or no, shall be forced to torments: the elect shall attend upon Christ back again, who shall enter into heaven at the head of them, and, with rejoicing, shew them all to his Father, as the children, which his eternal love had given him, and his own merits purchased.

I have not written these things to instruct any, in what they are ignorant of. I suppose, all know these first rudiments of truth. And it is a very fearful thing, to consider, that so many know the Day of Judgment, so certain, so dreadful, as it is held forth to be, and yet so few prepare for it. Let us be persuaded, therefore, to live as those, who must undoubtedly come to judgment, and give an account of all they have done in the flesh: otherwise, believe it, our knowledge of the Day of Judgment and of the great transactions which shall then be, will but make that day the more dreadful to us, and our eternal condemnation the more intolerable.

V. Consider the UNIVERSALITY of this judgment.

We all, saith the text, must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

i. All, WITHOUT EXCEPTION; and all, WITHOUT DISTINCTION.

1. *All must appear, without the Exception or Exemption of any from the trial of this Great Day.*

Rom. ii. 6, 9, 10. *God will render to every man according to his works: Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil....But glory and honour...upon every man that worketh good.* Nor greatness, nor goodness, can privilege any man from the sentence of the Judge; no more than here they can from the arrest of death. Nay, though death seems to be as universal as life itself: *What man is there that liveth, saith the Psalmist, and shall not see death?* it mows down all before it, and lays them in the dust: yet judgment is far more certain and universal, than death is. The Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 51.

that *we shall not all sleep*; that is, our death-sleep: at Christ's last appearance, there shall be a world full of men, some trading and some sinning, as now they are: none of these shall taste of death; but yet they must all undergo judgment. And, therefore, we rehearse it as an Article of our Faith, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick, or living, and the dead. All shall hear, and all must obey, the peremptory summons of the last trump: not a soul shall then hide itself in the crowd: not a body shall skulk in the grave. But all must appear. And, though our loose dust be scattered to the four winds of heaven; yet, by the almighty power of God and the ministry of angels, every dust shall be picked up, and rallied again into the same body. The Sea shall give up the dead, which are in it; and Death and the Grave shall deliver up the dead, which are in them; and every man shall be judged according to his works: as we have it described, Rev. xx. 13. And,

2. As all, without exception, so *all, without distinction*, must abide the trial of this Great Day.

God will be no acceptor of persons. Where the cause makes no difference, the Judge will not. He will as well hear what the consciences of the greatest can say against them, as what the consciences of the meanest; and give the Devil as free liberty, to accuse, to drag away, and damn princes, as peasants. Rev. xx. 12. *I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God*: they all stand: there, no one calls, "Bring a seat here, for this emperor, and that king: Make room there, for this nobleman, and that gentleman:" no; great and small, noble and contemptible, must all stand huddled, in the same common crowd, together. Indeed, there shall be no such distinction as great and small, according to worldly pre-eminence: there will appear great sinners, and less; and great saints, and less: but, between great persons and their inferiors, that day will know no difference: all shall there stand upon the same level: high and low, young and old, all must alike come to judgment: no reverence shall there be shewn to the grey-hairs of an old sinner, nor any pity to the cries of a young.

Thus must all appear; without Exception, and without Distinction.

ii. And that, FOR THESE REASONS:

1. *All are guilty, and all are accused; and, therefore, all must be judged.*

Both God's equity, and also the clamours of our great accuser, require, that not one guilty person escape judgment. Now, the whole world is guilty before God: even infants themselves, whose souls are but just dipped into their bodies, yet thereby become partakers of original sin: others grow up under innumerable actual provocations; every day and hour adding sin to sin, and guilt to guilt. If any might escape this trial, it might seem most reasonable, that true believers should, whose guilt is removed by free pardon and justification: but, though that guilt of their sins, which exposeth and is ordained unto condemnation, be removed; yet, because those sins, which God hath pardoned them, do for ever deserve condemnation, which guilt remission and justification can never take away; therefore the Devil will try the suit with them; and the great Day of Hearing will be the Day of Judgment, wherein all shall be impleaded, and, therefore, all must then appear to answer.

2. *All must appear, because, on this day, God intends, most solemnly, to manifest the riches of his mercy on all the vessels of mercy, and the severity of his wrath upon all the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.*

God hath, for this very end, decreed, that there shall be such a number of men in the world, and no more; that those two royal attributes of mercy and justice may be glorified upon them, especially in that Great Day. There is no part, in all eternity, so fitted for the exalting of mercy and justice, as this is: and, therefore, certainly, if God hath created all men to this very end, that they might be the standing monuments of these two attributes, they must all then appear, when these attributes may be most glorified. There was scarce any other reason, why God should create the world and men in it, but that the whole multitude of them, assembled together at the Last Day, should there serve for the glorious declaration of his justice in condemning them for their own sins, and of his mercy in saving his elect without their own merits: and, therefore, thou mayst as well not be a creature, as not appear at the Judgment-Seat, where the great end of thy creation shall be most solemnly accomplished. And, hence it is, that our Saviour saith, John vi. 39. *This is the Father's will, which hath sent me, That of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but*

should raise it up again at the Last Day: Christ shall raise them, that they may not be lost. Indeed, men were as good as lost, if they were not to rise again to judgment. It were almost lost labour to create them, and more loss to redeem them, were it not, that the judgment of the Last Day shall fulfil God's ends upon them: in glorifying his love and mercy, in the view and to the admiration of the whole world, in the salvation of some; and his justice and righteousness, in the damnation of others. As sure, therefore, as God hath not been at labour in vain, in making any one man in the world; so sure shall every man in the world come to judgment.

(1) Hence it is, that believers usually pass through a Fourfold Justification, before they come to be perfected in glory.

[1] The First is a Justification *in foro Divino*, in God's own breast.

Whereby he doth, according to his secret grace, pardon their sins, and accept them into favour and unto life eternal.

[2] The Second is a Justification *in foro Conscientiæ*, at the bar of their own consciences. And that is, when God's Spirit witnesseth with theirs, that they are the children of God.

When the Holy Ghost opens the Book of Life, before their eyes; and darts in such a beam of heavenly and supernatural light, as enables the soul clearly to read its name written therein: when they can see their election, adoption, and justification, in their sanctification; and their sanctification itself, both in the fruits of a holy life, and the testimony of God's Spirit: this is to be justified in the Court of Conscience. Now there is no absolute necessity of this: men's eternal state may be secured without it: but, yet, God doth thus sometimes vouchsafe to set up his judgment-seat and to acquit his children in their own consciences, that so they may glorify and adore the riches of divine mercy, in choosing, in calling, such as they are, while he passeth by the far greater part of the world; and, thereby, as far as in them lies, they fulfil the end why he doth so.

But the glory, that redounds to God by this justification, is but private and personal.

And, therefore, there is,

[3] A Third Justification; and that is *in foro Ecclesiæ Triumphantis*, before all the angels and saints in heaven.

The mercy of a king, in pardoning a malefactor, is most

honoured, when the pardon is read in full and open court. Here is a full assembly, even *the assembly of the first-born*: and, therefore, presently upon the death of his servants, as soon as their souls return to him, he doth, for the glorifying of his mercy and free grace, pronounce them acquitted and blessed, in the audience of saints and angels.

But, yet, neither is this an assembly full enough: there are vast numbers of sinners on earth and wretches in hell, who know not what transactions pass above in heaven.

And, therefore, for the glorifying of pardoning-mercy before them too, there shall be,

[4] A Fourth Justification, *pro Tribunali Christi*, before the judgment-seat of Christ, at the Last Day.

(2) Now, as there is this Fourfold Justification, so there is also proportionably a Fourfold Condemnation; and the last is before the tribunal of Christ too.

God will then assemble together angels and devils, saints and sinners, all the rational creation; that, before them, he may represent his mercy and justice, in their most conspicuous glory: his justice, in damning sinners, according to their own merits; his mercy, in saving his elect, according to the merits of Christ. And, therefore, all must then appear.

iii. And, if all must appear, then,

1. *What shame and confusion will cover the faces of wicked men, when their foul and gross sins shall be laid open before all the world of men and angels!*

This is the day, wherein the secrets of every man's heart shall be revealed, and the actions of every man's life brought to public view. *Nothing is secret*, saith our Saviour, *that shall not be made manifest*: Luke viii. 17. It is manifest to God already: Psal. xc. 8: *Thou hast set...our secret sins in the light of thy countenance*: but this, wicked men blush not at: though God sees them, and sees that he may punish them; yet they are neither ashamed for his knowledge, nor afraid of his justice. That, which most awes them, is, lest the world should know how base and wicked they are: but, let them dig never so deep, to hide their sins; let them draw night and darkness round about, when they commit them; yet, foolish creatures! the whole world must know what they think to conceal: unless thou canst find out such an obscure and retired corner, where neither God, nor the

Devil, nor thine own Conscience can follow thee; it is but childish to sin in secret: as good commit it on the house-top, in the face of the sun, in the concourse of people; for, if God, and the Devil, and thine own Conscience know it, the whole world must know it. Nay, the whole world of men, now living, are nothing, in comparison with the endless numbers of those, who must know thy greatest and vilest sins: all, who have ever lived from the foundation of the world, or shall until the final dissolution of it, shall hear the black catalogue of thy sins read over, sin by sin. Yea, the very sins of thy thoughts shall be ripped up: at such a time, blasphemy: at such a time, murder: at such a time, filthy lusts. Oh! whither wilt thou cause thy shame to go? where wilt thou hide thy head? Think, O Sinner! how wilt thou be able to look up, when God shall read aloud this long scroll of thy sins, in the hearing of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and all the world, both of good and bad? who shall as distinctly see thee, as though thou wert the only person to be then judged; and as thoroughly know thee, who thou art, under what education thou wast brought up, under what ministry thou hast lived, and what profession thou hast made, as though they had always been conversant with thee here on earth. Oh! the shame and amazement, which will then seize sinners, when God shall thus set their iniquities before their faces, to the everlasting confusion of their faces! It is indeed questioned, whether the sins of God's children shall be made public, at the Day of Judgment, to all the world: some deny it; because they think it unlikely, that God should uncover those sins in judging, which he hath already covered in justifying: but this proves it not; for, justification only covers our sins from condemnation, not from manifestation: it covers them from God's justice; but it doth not cover them from the world's notice: and, therefore, I think it most probable, that the sins of God's best saints and people, shall, in this universal judgment, be made known to all, both men and angels: the text tells us, that all must give an account of what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good or bad; and, besides, the sins of God's children and of wicked men are so entangled together, by many circumstances, that the one cannot be fully made known, without the other: nor yet will this expose them to shame; for that shall be fully swallowed up in the joy which they shall then have, that God is glorified: as they shall not

grieve at the damnation of their dearest friends, because God's justice is glorified, in their destruction; so neither shall they be ashamed at the publishing of their own sins to all the world, because the mercy of God shall be thereby glorified before all the world, in their pardon.

2. *Since our appearing at the Judgment-Seat of Christ is so necessary, how much doth it concern us, to endeavour that it may be joyful!*

And, how may this be accomplished, but,

(1) By labouring, in all things, to keep a good conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men; so to walk, that our hearts may never reproach us while we live, nor our consciences condemn us when we die?

Our rejoicing is this, saith the Apostle, *even the testimony of a good conscience*: 2 Cor. i. 12. And, if this be our rejoicing here on earth, this also will be our joy and glory at the Great Day.

(2) But, because there is no man living so perfect, but his own conscience may accuse him here, and will there bring in witness against him, of many sins he hath committed; therefore, if we would appear with joy at the Judgment-Seat, let us labour to procure an interest in Christ, the Judge.

Then, when thou standest at the great bar, thou mayst boldly throw out that challenge of the Apostle, *Who shall lay any thing to my charge?* If the Devil, if thy own Conscience answer, "Yes, we can: we can lay such and such sins to thy charge:" yea, but it is Christ that justifies; who shall condemn me? His merits, his righteousness, are mine; and, therefore, so is the glory purchased by them. This is that, which, when others shall call for rocks and hills to fall upon them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, will make us lift up our heads with joy, knowing that our redemption is drawn nigh.

Thus you have seen, Who must be judged; and that is, All Men.

Now,

VI. Consider **WHAT THEY MUST BE JUDGED FOR**, and what account they must give; and that is, for All Things.

They must receive, saith the text, according to all they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

But, yet, neither doth this seem fully to comprehend the

whole scope and latitude of this judgment. But they shall be judged according to Three things :

According to what they have done out of the body.

According to what they have been in the body.

According to what they have done in the body.

Now, because most of the judgment will be taken up in examining this last ; therefore, the Apostle, in the text, mentions only this ; though, indeed, we must pass under account for the other two also.

i. We must be judged, FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE OUT OF THE BODY.

I am far from Origen's opinion, who fancied that the souls of all men were existent, and did either merit or demerit, long before their union to their bodies. Neither do I think, that we shall give account for what our souls do, when they are separate from our bodies, in the space between the day of our death and the Day of Judgment : for the actions of the soul, either in heaven or hell, shall not be rewardable, but shall be part of the reward itself. As the blasphemies of the damned souls, now in hell, shall not be farther punishable ; because they are there one part of their punishment : so neither shall the praises and hallelujahs of the blessed saints, in heaven, be farther rewarded ; for these themselves are part of their reward.

And, yet, though our souls were not existent before they were joined to our bodies ; and, although we shall not be accountable, for what they do when they shall be parted from it : yet we must all undergo judgment, for what we have done out of the body. You will ask me, " What can this be ? " Indeed, it is but one action ; and that is the very first transgression, which was ever committed by man against God. Though this act were done some thousands of years since, yet the guilt of it still passeth down along upon us. Other sins we are guilty of by commission ; of this, by imputation : of others, in our persons ; of this, in our representative. And, yet, for this, as well as others, we must be answerable in that Great Day. As Christ's satisfaction is imputed to all believers, who are his spiritual offspring, as theirs ; and may be so pleaded by them, at the Day of Judgment : so is Adam's first transgression imputed to all his natural offspring, as theirs ; and it will be so charged upon them at that day. The Covenant of Grace entitles us to the righteousness of Christ, through our mystical union to him

by faith: the Covenant of Works entails Adam's guilt upon us, through our natural union to him, as our common parent; which gave him power to appear for us as our Federal Head, and to oblige us to stand or fall, according to the terms of the agreement entered into with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. All the world, which is now spread into so many thousand persons and families, lay all wrapped up together in his loins; and, when he lifted up his hand, in rebellion against God his Maker, he had the whole world of hands and hearts joining with him. Never was there any conspiracy against heaven, so general as that: for, in him, all sinned, saith the Apostle, Rom. v. 12: they were sinners in him, before they were creatures in themselves. Such early rebels were we against God, that we began to sin, when we were scarce any thing besides a notion.

This is that, which but few consider, and fewer lament; and, yet, this is that, which we have done out of our bodies, for which we must give an account: Rom. v. 18. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* And, certainly, if this one sin hath brought a judgment of condemnation upon all, it will likewise bring upon all a judgment of trial and examination. At this day, Adam shall stand forth at the head of all his wretched posterity; and God shall once more arraign him, as he did Gen. iii. 11. *Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?* Not he only, but the whole world with him, must then cry out, "Guilty! Guilty!" For other sins, particular persons must make particular answers: but, when this action comes to be tried, what an outcry will there be of all the world, at once confessing guilt and suing for mercy!

ii. All must be judged, FOR WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE BODY.

This is a day, wherein men's states shall be tried, as well as their actions. There are but two states, in which all men are: a state of nature, or a state of grace; of life, or death eternal. We are all by nature children of wrath, and heirs of perdition: that is our state: and the great question, in this judgment, will be, whether we have lived and died in this state, or not. This life is the only season allotted us for the changing of our state: now, or never to eternity, mayst thou, of a rebel, become a son;

of an heir of perdition, be made an heir of glory: now, or never, may we have our natures renewed, our hearts sanctified, grace implanted, lusts subdued, and heaven and happiness ascertained to us. And, yet, how many of us are there, whose lives are well nigh spent, and yet whose natures are not hitherto changed! who have death breeding in their very bowels, and yet have not Christ formed in their hearts! Eternal woe unto such, if God snatch them hence in a sinful, unregenerate state; for, according to the state that death finds them in, so shall judgment pass upon them.

And yet, O desperate madness and folly of men, who, by wretched sloth and wilful neglects and endless delays, put it to the venture, whether God will not damn them the very next hour! Be persuaded to pass a judgment upon yourselves, upon your state, before God comes to do it. What think you, whose image and superscription do you bear? do you belong to God, or to the Devil? hath there a mighty change from an almighty grace passed upon you, or are you still the same you were? What is your state? is it a state of spiritual blindness and spiritual death, or are you changed from darkness to light, and raised from death to life? Listen! what say your hearts to this? do they not generally suggest to you, that as yet you find no such mighty change wrought in you; but yet you hope it may be wrought time enough for your salvation? Speak out: is not this the very answer, which many of your hearts give you? And, what! will you hazard the sentence of the dreadful judgment upon "it may be?" It may be, God may change thy state and nature; but may it not likewise be, that God may cut thee off, and summon thee to judgment in thy old and sinful state, and pronounce sentence upon thee as thou shalt then be found?

Methinks, this should prevail with all of us, since the judgment must proceed according to the state in which death finds and leaves us; and, if our state be not now this moment changed, death may possibly seize us before it can be changed: this, I say, should prevail with us to give neither God nor ourselves any rest, till we are passed from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. It is then too late to seek for oil, when the bridegroom is already come: too late to call and cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*, when the door is already shut. The door of hope is for ever shut against us, as soon as we

enter into the gates of death. If death find thee out of a state of grace, judgment will certainly leave thee in a state of condemnation.

iii. All must be judged, FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IN THE BODY, whether it be good or bad.

Nothing, that hath been done in the world, shall always lie buried in oblivion. As there shall be a general resurrection of men, so there shall be a resurrection of their actions too. Then shall be known the true and complete history of the world: it is a natural and strong desire which we have, to be acquainted with what hath been done in the ages past before us: what great actions great persons have performed: at this day, we shall receive punctual information; and hear every one relate himself the story of his own life. Here, all the hidden mysteries of iniquity will be brought to light: those secret sins, which have been concealed from the eyes of men, shall then be proclaimed aloud in their ears: we must give God a strict account, and the whole world a perfect narrative, of them all: Rom. xiv. 12. *Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God: and, 1 Cor. iii. 13. Every man's work shall be made manifest; for that day shall declare it:* all the wickednesses that men have brooded on and hatched in the darkest vaults of their own hearts, or acted in the obscurest secrecy, shall be then made as manifest, as if they were every one of them written on their foreheads, with the point of a sunbeam. Here, on earth, none know so much of us, neither would we that they should, as our own consciences: and, yet, those great secretaries, our own consciences, what through ignorance or searedness, overlook many sins which we commit; of which, at that day, they shall be informed. But our own consciences shall not know more of us, than all the world shall: for all, that hath been done, shall be brought into public notice; and we must give a most strict and particular account of all.

We must give an account for all: but this account will be most dreadful and terrible, when God comes to reckon with us upon these following particulars.

1. We must give an account *for all the Sins which we have committed, and not repented of.*

There is not a sin we commit, but God sets it down in his book of remembrance. There they all stand, written down in order, under every one of our names. Now, as we truly repent

of any sin, so God blots it out: Acts iii. 19. *Repent ye, therefore.....that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord*: that is, *Repent*, that so, at the Day of Judgment, the great debt-book may be found crossed and blotted, and not one sin legible against you to your condemnation. But, oh! what horror will seize on impenitent wretches in that day, when God shall open the debt-book to them, and shew them so many thousand sins standing all upon account, not one of them crossed out; not a tear of their own, nor so much as a drop of blood from Christ, to make one blot! It is easy and joyful to account for a crossed debt; to see, as true believers do, how much was once owing, and how much is now paid for: but, when wicked men shall see themselves chargeable with so many thousand talents, what else can they expect, but presently to be cast into that prison, whence they shall not come forth, till they have paid the uttermost farthing?

2. As we must account for sins not repented of, so *for Duties slightly and hypocritically performed*.

Indeed, many seem to provide against this danger: how is it possible, that they should give an account of their duties, who think not of what they say, nor of what they do, while they are performing them? But, yet, believe it, God writes down your prayers, word for word, after you; and he makes observations on them too: At such a petition, the heart ran gadding after a vain and foolish thought, that came cross it; and left the lips to walk alone: At such a confession, while the tongue spake bitter things against sin, yet the heart embraced and cherished it. Though men pray so, as that they scarce hear themselves, nor regard what themselves utter: yet, certainly, God hears them, and God regards them; not, indeed, so as to accept them, but so as to judge them for such slubbered and perfunctory duties. And, that holy and reverend name of God, which they mutter over without either fear or affection, he will then severely vindicate; when taking his name in vain in a duty, shall be as strictly accounted for, as blaspheming his name in an oath.

3. We must account *for all the Ordinances and Means of Grace, which we have sat unprofitably under*.

Then it will be reckoned up against us, that, at such a time, we heard the terrors of the Law denounced, and yet were not frightened by them: at such a time, the mercy of the Gospel, the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save us, and yet were

not affected by it. Nay, these very discourses of the Day of Judgment must, at that day, be accounted for; whether you have been persuaded by them, so to prepare your accounts, that you may be able to give them up with joy, at this great and terrible day.

4. You must reckon *for every Talent entrusted to you*, whether you have husbanded it for your Lord's advantage.

God affords you means of grace to receive good, and he lends you talents to do good; and you must give an account of the right improving of both.

Is it Authority and Power as a Magistrate, that God hath given thee? He will, at this day, call thee to account, how thou hast used it; what vice thou hast suppressed; what zeal thou hast shewn in revenging God's honour, upon daring and impudent miscreants: whether thou hast punished the wickedness, not only of poor, trembling inferiors, but of proud and potent sinners; who make it their sport to baffle authority, and, as they deny the God of Heaven, so deride and scorn the Gods of the Earth. God will call thee to account, whether they have been a terror to thee, or thou to them; what reformation thou hast wrought in the place where thou livest; what crimes, by thy cowardly connivance, thou hast made thine own, and brought upon thine own soul. Shall there a drunkard reel home unpunished; his drunkenness is thine. Shall a blasphemous swearer rend and tear the holy name of the Great God, by his execrable oaths and curses, and yet escape; his oaths are thine, and all his curses will fall heavy on thine own head. Shalt thou know of any abominable lewdness and filthiness committed within the verge of thy power, and not execute vengeance for it; thou thyself art guilty of it. Shalt thou know any who profane the Lord's Day, and those holy ordinances which are thereon celebrated, and not vindicate the honour and worship of that God from whom thou hast received thy authority; thou art thyself the sabbath-breaker, and, by not reprovng and punishing the works of darkness in others, makest thyself a partaker of them, as the Apostle speaks Eph. v. 11. For these things, the Great God will bring thee to a strict and particular account; and, according as men's authority and the abuse of it have been the greater, so likewise shall their punishment be in hell: and, that they may not lose of their place and dignity, they shall be preferred to the next in torments, to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

Is it Wealth and Riches, with which God hath entrusted you? Know, that thou art but God's steward, and the keeper of his purse for the poor and needy. Thou art mistaken, if thou lookest upon what thou hast to be thine own, and at thine own dispose: no; it is only given thee to employ for thy Master's advantage; and he will reckon with thee for every farthing of thy estate, whether spent upon thy vain pleasures, or in refreshing the bowels of his poor saints and members. If either, by thy covetousness, thou hast dammed up and stopped the current of God's bounty that hath flown in upon thee, and kept it from overflowing upon others also; or hast turned it aside into wrong channels, and hast profusely lavished out that plenty with which God hath blessed thee, in riot, excess, and debauchery, maintaining thy lusts at God's charge; be assured, that every penny of this ill-kept or ill-spent estate, shall, in this great Day of Judgment, prove a talent, but a talent of lead, to sink thy soul deep for ever, in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Or, hath God given thee Spiritual Gifts, tending more immediately unto edification? Assuredly, God will enquire, at this day, whose ignorance thou hast informed, whose deadness thou hast quickened, whose heart thou hast warmed by holy and heavenly discourses, whom thou hast converted from the error of his ways, or forwarded in the way of holiness and salvation. And, if it shall be then found, that thou hast been an unprofitable servant, and hid thy talent; nay, it may be not only so, but a wasteful servant, and spent it; mayest thou not fear, lest the same doom should pass upon thee at the Day of Judgment, as did upon him, Mat. xxv. 30? *Cast him into utter darkness: where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.*

5. We must give an account of *all the Providences, that have befallen us in our whole life*, both in a way of mercy and judgment; and what effect each hath had upon us.

Whether mercies have made us more thankful and fruitful; whether judgments have made us more humble and penitent; whether the cords of God's love have drawn us, or his rod hath driven us nearer to him. There is not one dispensation of God's Providence, but it hath some influence upon our spiritual and eternal state and condition: either it proves a help or a hindrance to a holy life: either it unites the heart nearer unto God, or else alienates it more from him. And what use we have made of every providence, will be one great enquiry of this Great Day. Thou hast been delivered from many dangers,

and from many deaths: God will examine, whether thou hast given up thy life to the service of that God, who hath rescued it from the very brink of destruction; or hast looked upon thyself as one delivered only to commit far greater abominations than ever before. God, it may be, hath laid sore and heavy afflictions upon thee: this day must give account, whether thou hast, with a meek spirit, patiently submitted to his visitation, and, in the calmness and serenity of thy soul, satisfied thyself in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God; his wisdom, whereby he knows what is best for us; his goodness, whereby he will do that to us, which he knoweth to be best: or hast galled thy shoulders, by striving with thy yoke; vexed and roaring like a wild bull in a net; fretting and exasperating thyself against God and Providence, and, in the time of thy distress, sinning yet more against him: whether, when God, by his judgments, hath ploughed thee up, and made long furrows upon thee, this ploughing hath only made thee more rough and uneven, or hath prepared thee to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God. This also will be brought to trial at the Great Day of Judgment.

6. We must give an account *of the Motions of the Holy Ghost, and the Convictions of our own Consciences*, whether we have cherished or stifled them.

And, assuredly, at that day, conscience will be very mindful to inform against us, in this particular. How many good motions, and holy purposes and resolutions, have we murdered in their very infancy! our hearts have been both their womb and tomb: they have been buried in the same place, where they were conceived. When conscience hath reproved us, how often have we stopped its mouth, and offered violence to it! well! at this day it will revenge itself, and give in dreadful accusations against you, for not suffering it now to give you necessary reproof. Then, it will shew the bloody wounds and deep gashes, that all your wilful sins have made in it: and depose against you, how often you have striven against the strivings of God's Spirit; how often you have desperately rushed into those crimes, from which it would have withheld you; and most wretchlessly omitted those duties, of the necessity of which you were fully convinced. And, sad and dreadful will that account be, which we must then give of all those holy motions, which have been stifled to death in us. And,

7. We must give an account *of those numberless Sins of our*

Thoughts and Words, which, as slight as we reckon them, must pass under particular examination, as well as the more observable actions of our lives.

(1) Our Thoughts claim now a privilege of being exempted from man's judgment and censure.

They lie hid in the inmost recesses and retirements of our souls, whither no created eye can reach to discover them. But, at this day, those callow and unfledged sins, those lusts which lie like beds of knotted and crawling serpents in our hearts, shall be brought forth to see the light: *For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known: Mat. x. 26. In that day, when God shall reveal the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ: Rom. ii. 16.* Hypocrisy, and fair pretences, and a smooth life and conversation, do oftentimes put such a varnish upon a rotten heart, that we cannot now, without uncharitableness, judge ill of its thoughts and intentions: but, as it fares with painted faces, bring them to the fire, and their paint and daubing will shrivel up and fall off; so, as to these formal hypocrites, when heaven and earth shall be all on a flame about them, the scorching force of this great fire will make all their paint fall off, and expose the very thoughts of their hearts, a naked and a loathsome spectacle to the whole world. Then we must give an account to God, for all those atheistical, blasphemous, bloody, and unclean thoughts, that have bubbled up in our hearts: what entertainment we have given them: whether we have, with abhorrence and detestation, cast that filth back in the Devil's face; or, have sat brooding on those cockatrice's eggs, and enjoyed those sins in contemplation, which, for shame or outward restraints, we durst not commit in outward act. Believe it, how fond or favourable soever we may be towards these first-born of our hearts, looking upon our thoughts as thin ærial things, and but as shadows cast by our minds and fancies; yet, certainly, in God's account, who is a spirit, these spiritual wickednesses are as substantial crimes and solid iniquities, as those others, which are branded with infamy and scandal among men. And,

(2) We must give an account for every Word which we have spoken.

What a dreadful echo shall we then hear, when all our vain, rotten, unsavoury discourses shall be repeated in our ears, louder than the voice of thunder! It is a terrible place, Mat. xii. 36. *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they*

shall give account for it in the Day of Judgment. An idle word: that is, a word spoken to no commendable end or purpose. Our vain, frothy, light, and wanton discourses, all our superfluous tattle, every word that might be better spared than spoken, shall be reckoned for at this Great Day. How much more, then, our filthy and rotten communication; oaths, and curses, and blasphemies; backbitings, revilings, and malicious slanders; and such speeches, as leave the very soot of hell in the mouths that utter them! how much more severely shall these be accounted for! Oh! what a just and strict God have we to deal with! And, how deep have our own tongues set us on the score! We have talked ourselves in debt unto divine justice; and every vain, frivolous, and impertinent word, stands as an item to inflame the reckoning that we must then make. O Lord! set thou a watch upon the doors of our lips, and guide thou the moving of our tongues, that they may not now be set on fire of hell, nor hereafter set on fire in hell.

Now, when we shall be reckoned with for Sins, which we have committed and not repented of; for Duties, which we have performed slightly and hypocritically; for Ordinances and Means of Grace, which we have sat under unprofitably; for Gifts and Talents, which we have not husbanded; for Providences, which we have not improved; for the Convictions of our own Consciences and the Motions of God's Spirit, which we have not seconded; for the vanity of our Thoughts, the superfluity and frothiness of our Words; alas! what account can we give of these things? We cannot answer the demands of God's justice, for one of a thousand. And, therefore, as when Alcibiades* went to visit Pericles, but was refused admission, with this excuse, That he was then busy studying, how to give up his accounts to the state; "Tell him," saith he, "that it were wiser for him to study how he might give no account:" so, truly, since we can give no good account, it will be our wisdom to study, how we may give no account, nor be ourselves answerable for what we have done. This can no otherwise be, than by getting an interest in Jesus Christ, that he may answer, and make up our accounts for us at that day; and, at every item reckoned up against us, may say, that it is discharged, blotted, and crossed out, by his own most precious blood. This is the

* Plutarch Alcibiades.

only way for us, who are such desperate debtors, to appear with confidence before our great creditor.

VII. Let us now, in the Seventh place, consider **ACCORDING TO WHAT LAW** this judgment must pass upon us.

A law consists of two parts: a precept, or prohibition; and a promise, or threatening. According to the former, it is a rule to direct the obedience of the subject: according to the latter, it is a rule to direct the proceedings of the judge. The precept and prohibition are given to regulate our actions; and God hath added the promise and threatening, as that, according to which he will regulate his justice.

Now, that we may not, at this Great Day, miscarry in point of law, as being ignorant either of what we ought to do now, or what our judge will do then, I shall endeavour to shew you what that law is, according to which sentence must be pronounced upon all.

There is, therefore, a Twofold Law, by which men shall be judged; Unwritten, and Written. Or, if you will, both are written: the one, upon the heart; the other, in the word.

i. There is the **UNWRITTEN LAW**, or **THE LAW THAT IS WRITTEN ONLY UPON THE HEART**.

And this consists in those practical principles, which are deeply engraven upon the consciences of Heathens; and which, neither tract of time nor custom of sinning could ever utterly raze out. This is that light in the understanding, which naturally discovers good and evil: that voice in the conscience, which exhorts and admonishes, comforts and terrifies, accuses or excuses; being itself both law, judge, and witness, in a man's own bowels.

This Unwritten or Natural Law, for the substance and matter of it, is the same with the Moral Law contained in the Scriptures. It requires the performance of the duties of religion, towards God; the duties of sobriety, towards ourselves; and the duties of love and charity, towards others. All these, even the Unwritten Law, and those common notions in the hearts of Heathens themselves, did strictly command and enforce. So the Apostle, Rom. ii. 14. *The Gentiles, which have not the Law, do, by nature, the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: that is, though they have not the Written Law promulgated among them; yet, the Un-*

written Law of Nature prompted them to the performance of what is contained in the Written Law. And this shews, saith he, ver. 15. *the work of the Law written in their hearts*: the Work of the Law was written in their hearts, when as the Words of the Law were not written in their books.

But, though this be the same for the sum of it, yet it is not so perfect and entire as the Written Law is. The ruins of the great fabric do not so fully represent it, as an artificial draught taken by some skilful pencil; in which we may see the whole proportion, and every part of it expressed exactly. This great and stately fabric is man, in his first creation. The Written Law is a perfect draught of him, taken by the hand of God himself; and exactly represents what he was, while he stood in his beauty and perfection. The Unwritten Law is the ruins of this great fabric, upon which there are still left some prints and footsteps of its former state and glory. Something there is, which shews what man once was, and directs what man should be; yea, so much, that it is both a wonder and a shame to Christians, that many Heathens, who have had none other guide, have left behind them such examples of a singular and raised virtue, as few among us are either able or willing to imitate.

This Unwritten Law, or the Law of Nature, is that, whereby Heathens shall be judged at the Last Day. No law is obligatory, till it hath received a sufficient promulgation; for, if it lie locked up in the magistrate's cabinet and be not made public, it binds no man either to obedience or punishment: now, it was impossible, that either the Law of Moses or the Doctrine of Christ should, in former ages, have been made known to all the remote Heathens on earth, unless it were by miracle: the greatest part of the world was not known to be, or to be inhabited, to the Jews, or to Christians that lived in former days: and, therefore, the knowledge of the Law or Gospel could not be conveyed to them, unless God should delegate some angel to such an extraordinary ministry, which, it is certain, he never did: and, therefore, this Law, which they knew not of, this Gospel, which was never preached among them, could not oblige them either to obedience unto God, or to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. When they sin, they transgress not the Law of Moses, unless it be materially only; but, formally, they transgress the law of their own natural light and reason. And, certainly, that law, which they sin not against, shall not be the

law by which they must be judged: so saith the Apostle, speaking of the Heathens, Rom. ii. 12. *As many as have sinned without the law, i. e. without the written Law of Moses, shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law.* And the very same may be said of the Gospel also: it will not be required of Heathens, in this Great Day, to produce their faith: though the Athenians, in their blind superstition, built an altar unto the Unknown God; yet, certainly, it is not possible, that faith should fix upon an Unknown Saviour: no; unbelief will be but the sin of a few men, although it will be the condemnation of the most Christians; and that, because those, who are called Christians, are but a few, in comparison with those endless multitudes, who have never heard of the name or the doctrine of Christ, and therefore shall not be judged for rejecting either him or it. The great question, that shall be put to these men, will be, Whether they have lived and acted according to the dictates of right reason: Whether they have followed the conduct of their natural light, and obeyed the commands of their natural conscience: or, Whether they have gone contrary to it; damping their light, stifling their convictions, and imprisoning the truth in righteousness.

Thus shall Heathens, and they alone, be judged according to the light within them; because they had no other duty incumbent upon them, than to follow that light: which, while some frantic people now-a-days among us cry up as the only rule for practice and guide to happiness, they do what in them lies, to reduce themselves back to the state and condition of Heathens; and, for such, they may be reckoned, for they can scarce, without an abuse, be called Christians.

And if Heathens shall, at last, be thus judged according to the Law of Nature, then may we here learn,

1. *What to judge concerning their Salvation.*

It is not want of charity, but the evidence of truth, which makes us believe, that not one of them can, in an ordinary manner, be saved: I say, in an ordinary manner, because, whether God hath not or may not, in an extraordinary way, reveal Christ to some particular persons among them, is not for us to determine: I would, it were more probable, than it seems to be. But, if God proceed with none of them in this world, in any other than an ordinary way, certain it is, though sad, that when he comes to judge them, they must be all cast and condemned.

Acts iv. 12. There is salvation in no other, but in Christ; *for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved*: and, therefore, if Christ hath not been made known to them by a miracle, (which is too unlikely) judgment must sadly pass against them. And, what a sad thing is it, to consider, that incomparably the greatest part of the world, many of them endowed with gifts to be admired, many of them adorned with virtues scarce to be imitated, grave, and wise, and learned, and temperate, and public-spirited Heathens, must, perhaps, all perish, not having the Gospel, which alone can discover to them the way of life and salvation! Oh! the justice and severity of God! *How unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out!* Now, it appears clearly, that if God will judge them according to their own light, they will be found guilty; from this reason, because the will of man is more corrupted by the Fall, than his understanding and conscience is: so that those things, which we have light enough to discover to be our duty, we have not will enough to perform. There is no mere man in the world, nor ever was, who fully lived up to his convictions. And, therefore, though Heathens shall be tried by nothing else but the Light of Reason and the Law of Nature; yet this is enough to condemn them, for not living answerably to the dictates thereof. So the Apostle, Rom. i. 20, 21. *They are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*: and, v. 32. *Knowing the judgment of God, that they, which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

2. This may inform us *what to judge*, as concerning their salvation, so concerning their *Condemnation*.

If they shall not be judged for unbelief, for neglecting so great salvation as Christ hath purchased and the Gospel tendered, then, certainly, their condemnation will be much more tolerable, than the condemnation of unbelieving Christians. What saith our Saviour, John xv. 22? *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.* All the sins committed against the holiness of the Law, are as none in comparison with the great sin of slighting the mercy of the Gospel. And, therefore, we find that Sodom and Gomorrha, for whose monstrous wickedness God rained a hell out of heaven itself, are yet said to be more tolerably punished, than Bethsaida, and Chorazin, and Capernaum shall be, at the Day of Judgment:

Mat. xi. 22. Why! what is their sin, but only that Christ preached unto them and wrought miracles among them; and yet they repented, they believed not? This comes to judge, and expose them to a far more intolerable condemnation, than the vile and horrid lusts of a heathenish Sodom. *Thou, Capernaum, saith our Saviour, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: lifted up to heaven, in privileges; and thrown down to hell, in punishments.* Believe it, whosoever goes down to hell with the load of Church-Privileges and Church-Ordinances upon him, will never leave sinking and sinking, till he comes to the very bottom. And, assure yourselves, whosoever lies uppermost, yet the bottom of hell shall be paved with Christians.

That is the first particular: Heathens shall be judged, at the Last Day, by the Unwritten Law; the Law and Light of Nature remaining in their consciences: and, therefore, their condemnation is, in an ordinary way, more inevitable; but shall also be more tolerable, than the condemnation of others.

ii. There is a WRITTEN LAW, whereby all, who live within the sound and notice of it, must be judged.

And that is twofold: either the Law of Works: or the Law of Faith: or, if you will, both these are but one Law of Works: the one, as fulfilled by us in our own persons; the other, as fulfilled by us in Christ. The voice of the Law of Works, is, *Do this, and live.*

Now, the truth is, though believers have been guilty of numberless transgressions; yet they may be very well content to be tried by this law: and that, because, though they have transgressed this law, yet it is no contradiction to affirm, that they have fulfilled it too. In themselves, personally considered, they have transgressed it: in Christ, mystically considered, they have fulfilled it. And, oh! what an unspeakable comfort will it be, when the Devil shall, in that Great Day, bristle up against us and accuse us of many thousand sins, that we may, under a blessed distinction, give him the lie! we are not transgressors, but fulfillers of the Law: we have done what is required; for Christ, our Saviour, hath done it; and Christ and we are one. Now, although, according to this sense, believers may stand acquitted in judgment, even by the Law of Works; yet the Scripture doth rather choose to express the transactions of that

Great Day, to be according to the Law of Works or Faith; that is, according to the tenor of the Law or Gospel.

1. This is the unspeakable comfort of all true believers, that, at this Great Day, they *shall not be judged by the Law of Works, according to its literal sense; but by the Gospel.*

The tenor of the Gospel is, *Whosoever believeth, shall be saved.* The reason of all that Christ hath done in the world, why he took upon him the form of a servant, why he underwent the death of a malefactor, lies couched in this, that believers might obtain eternal life. This is the depth of that mystery, which angels pry into: this is the sum of that ministry, which is committed unto us: this is the form of that trial, which must pass upon you, whether you have received Christ by faith, who hath been revealed and tendered to you in the Gospel. It will then be but a vain and fruitless labour, for the Devil to heap up accusations against us: for, though the Law saith, *The soul, that sinneth, it shall die;* yet faith will then remove the suit from God's Common Bar, to his Court of Chancery, if I may so speak; from the letter of the Law, to the more equitable construction of it. And here it will be found, that you have already satisfied the Law: you, in Christ, have done it; and therefore stand free from its condemnation.

2. Unbelievers shall, at the Last Day, be judged *by both these laws;* both by the Law of Works and the Law of Faith: and, what will be to their inconceivable horror, both will condemn them.

The severity of the Law casts them: the mercy of the Gospel cannot relieve them. When God shall ask them, how they will be tried; by the Law, or by the Gospel: if they say, by the Law, that tells them, *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, written in it, to do them:* tell me, are ye so well persuaded and confident of your own righteousness and innocence, that you will stand to this sentence? will you venture the everlasting state of your souls upon this trial, that you cannot be proved guilty of any transgression? and, if your own consciences now accuse you, will they not much more, think you, accuse you then? Will you appeal to the Gospel? that tells you, *He, that believeth not, is condemned already:* John iii. 18: and, *He, that believeth not.....the wrath of God abideth on him:* John iii. 36: nay, let me tell you, the Gospel will be so far from relieving you, that it will but add to the condemnation of the Law: the Law sentenceth sinners to hell, for transgressing it;

but, then, the Gospel lays on more load, and heats the furnace sevenfold hotter for those, who have not only violated the Law, but rejected pardon. He dies deservedly, who, being condemned by the law of the prince, slights his mercy too. This is the case of every unbeliever: they are all condemned, by law: God tenders them a pardon: Christ offers himself for their Saviour, his blood for their ransom: this Saviour they reject: this blood they trample on, and even dare God to do his worst. And, therefore, there is no one sin in the world, that carries so much provocation in it, as this of unbelief doth: it is an injury done to the tenderest of God's attributes, his mercy: it is an affront upon his dearest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and, therefore, shall be revenged with a most aggravated condemnation. Oh! then, what fears and terrors will encompass them round, who, when the Law hath condemned them for transgression, shall find themselves much more condemned for unbelief! The blood of Christ is not shed in vain: not a drop of it is spilt upon the ground, as water that cannot be gathered up again: it will, certainly, either justify, or condemn; either save, or destroy. And look, of what efficacy it is, to remove guilt from the souls of true believers; of the like efficacy it is, to bring guilt upon the souls of unbelievers: if, therefore, the blood of Christ, applied by faith, be of power to remove the guilt of all the sins which we have committed; the same blood, rejected by unbelief, will bring in a greater and sorer guilt upon us, than all the sins which we have committed besides. Be persuaded, therefore, never to leave praying and waiting, till the God of all grace be pleased to work this precious grace of faith in thee; without which, thou canst neither please him, nor be well-pleasing to him: that so, the blood of Jesus Christ may, in that Great Day, be found upon thy heart, for thy justification; and not upon thy head, for thy condemnation.

VIII. In the Eighth place, consider, who shall then appear, to ACCUSE and WITNESS against us.

Men shall have a fairer trial before Christ's tribunal, than Christ himself had before man's. The Scripture tells us, that many false witnesses were suborned, to accuse him. And, it seems, their rage against him made them forget that principal rule of lying, viz. that it be uniform and congruous: for it is said, that their witnesses *agreed not together*. But, when we come to judgment, we shall have nothing to except against the

undoubted truth of the witnesses: yea, and though they are of different interests and natures; yet their depositions against us shall punctually agree.

i. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE shall, at that day, give in clear and positive evidence against us.

And this is such a witness, as none can suspect or challenge of falsehood. He is privy to all we do: for all things are open and naked to his eyes: Heb. iv. 13. It is as impossible to conceal any thing from his notice, as it is to do any thing without his permission. Every action must receive a passport from him; and, therefore, certainly, what cannot escape his providence, cannot escape his knowledge. He is company to us in solitariness. He is day about us at midnight. He sees our souls, more clearly than we can see one another's faces: and he hears the voice of our thoughts, more distinctly, than we can hear the sound of one another's words.

And where then will ungodly sinners appear, when Omniscience itself shall depose against them? when an all-knowing God shall rise up to accuse them? Now, indeed, God forbears them so long, till their impunity votes against his knowledge; and persuades them, that he sees them not, nor takes any notice of what they do. This is, usually, all the thanks they return his patience; that, because he winks at them, therefore they conclude him blind. But what saith God concerning these men, Psal. l. 21? *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself*: here man passeth judgment on God. But, when God passeth judgment on man, he saith, *But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes*: and this God doth, to some, in the judgment-day of conviction; but, to all, in the judgment-day of condemnation. He sets their sins in order before their faces.

This expression denotes unto us Two things.

First. How clear God's knowledge of our sins is in itself: that he will set the vast and confused heap of them in order, at that day. He will marshal them in the same rank and order, in which they were committed. The time, the place, the persons concerned, the occasions, the temptations, the aggravations, and all the circumstances of our sins, lie all a-row in his knowledge; and every sin shall then be as distinctly and particularly discovered by him, as ever it was committed by us.

Secondly. It denotes, how convictive this knowledge will be unto sinners. He will set their sins before their face: that is, he will so particularly represent unto them whatsoever they have done, and in what manner, that they shall, as it were, plainly see every sin before their eyes, and be forced to acknowledge them for their own sins.

This knowledge of God, which shall give in evidence at the Great Tribunal, carries in it Two things, which may justly make it very terrible unto sinners.

1. In that it is the knowledge *of the Judge*.

What can be more dreadful to the prisoner at the bar, than for the judge himself to accuse him? he may cavil against the testimonies of other witnesses; but what plea can he have, when the judge shall pronounce him guilty, upon his own knowledge? This is the very case of sinners: many witnesses shall be produced against them, at the Last Day, who shall bring in great accusations and strong evidences: but none of these shall so daunt and damp them, as when God the Judge shall, from his throne, attest, that, upon his own knowledge, all is truth. They can expect nothing, but the sentence of the judge, to pronounce them damned; who have thus the knowledge of the judge, to pronounce them guilty.

2. It is the knowledge and testimony *of Him, who is Truth itself*; and, therefore, cannot be contradicted or denied.

And what can save them, if truth itself shall testify against them? unless that God, who is true in giving witness, should be unjust in giving sentence, which is impossible. It is impossible, likewise, that those, whom his knowledge doth accuse, his justice should acquit. Think then, O Sinner! what will become of thee, when thy sins shall be testified to thy face; not by any false or forged witness, but by the truth of God, to whom it is impossible either to lie or err: when his truth shall aver unto his justice, that thou art guilty, and both truth and justice consent together to thy condemnation. In 2 Kings v. 25. Gehazi returns from cheating of Naaman, and stands very demurely before his master: *Whence comest thou, Gehazi? Thy servant went no whither*: No! saith the Prophet: *Did not my heart go with thee?* so, when men shall stand before the Great God, he will call to them by name; “Sinner, what didst thou, such a day and hour of thy life?” It will be then in vain, to make any lame excuses; in vain to say, Thy servant did nothing. “No! was not mine eye upon thee? was not my heart with thee, to observe

thy actions? Didst thou not, at such a time, wrong thy brother, by base fraud and injustice? at such a time, abuse thyself by riot and intemperance? at such a time, blaspheme me, by hellish oaths and curses?" Men may, perhaps, think me somewhat coarse and blunt with them, to tell them of such sins as these are: but I beseech them to consider, how they will answer God, when he shall reckon up against them these and other like sins; and accuse them of them upon his own knowledge. Here, men stand upon their own reputation: tell a sot, though he reels again, that he is drunk; or a thief, that he steals; or a liar, that he lies; and straight, in a rage, they will bid you prove it. But, when God shall, at the Last Day, accuse them of these sins, it will be found proof sufficient, that he, who is Truth itself, shall depose it against them.

That is, therefore, the First Witness, God's Knowledge.

ii. MEN'S CONSCIENCES also shall, in that day, bring in accusations against them.

And, indeed, conscience is not one witness, but a thousand: a whole cloud of witnesses; and such witnesses, as will speak truth too. Now, possibly, men's consciences may be seared so, as not to speak at all; or bribed so, as to speak nothing but flatteries, with Ahab's prophets, *Go on, and prosper*. But, yet, those sins, which they seem to take no notice of, when committed, they will fearfully exaggerate, when accounted for. Though, here, conscience seems to be like the unjust steward, and sets down fifty for a hundred, and small sins for great; yet, at that day, it will mend its accounts, and give them up faithfully and impartially. Some sinners are, even in this life, self-condemned: conscience hath sat upon them, and doomed them already. But all shall be so in the next: the process of God's justice shall be so clear, that men shall bring in evidence against themselves; and God shall need no other course to condemn them, but out of their own mouths: when God shall read over the catalogue of every man's sins against him, they shall all be found subscribed and attested by every man's conscience: and this, certainly, will be accepted as a competent witness, as having been always with the sinner, a register in his own breast, and having noted down every action of his life. Indeed, some men live as if they had no conscience at all: they do that, almost every day, which might set all the furies of hell about them; and, yet, they feel no terrors, no stings, nor scorpions. Well

their conscience is not dead, but sleepeth: it is in a deep sleep; but the sound of the last trumpet will certainly awaken it. And, oh! how dreadful will it be, when they shall first of all hear an unknown voice, which they never heard before, accuse them aloud; and, from within them, out of their own bowels, call for wrath and condemnation upon them? how sad will it be, for conscience to give its first shriek and outcry at the great bar; and never to accuse them, before it comes there for ever to condemn them! It is not so much to be heeded, what a partial conscience saith now unto you; as what it will say at this great day: now, it may be like a bell while raising; it speaks only on one side, and sounds nothing but Peace, Peace: but, then, this peaceable conscience will grow suddenly enraged; and the first ill word, which you may hear, will be the calling for wrath and vengeance upon you.

That is the Second Witness, which shall be brought in against men at the Day of Judgment; their own Consciences.

iii. As God and Conscience, so THE DEVIL also will come in, to witness against sinners, and condemn them.

There are, in witnesses, many times, two qualities: the one, is a spleen and grudge against the offender; and this makes them willing: the other, is a personal knowledge of the offence; and this makes them able, to give in witness against him. In both these, the Devil abounds: he hath a most rancoured malice against all mankind; and industriously seeks how he may, by any means, compass their destruction: and he hath a personal knowledge of their sins too; and therefore will, doubtless, come in to accuse them. You see how ready he was to calumniate Job, though he must impudently contradict God, to do it: how much more ready will he be, to accuse profane sinners, when his testimony against them shall agree with God's! Though, now, he shews them a fair and flattering face, when he tempts; yet, then, he will appear in all his hideousness and horror, when he shall drag them to the great bar, and there accuse them: "Lord, here is a wretch, guilty of such and such crimes, that deserve thy damnation."—"How knowest thou, Satan?"—"How know I? He did it upon my persuasions: I tempted him to it: I presented objects: I suited him with opportunities: I excited his inward lusts to embrace them: it was at such a time, in such a place, with such and such circumstances." Believe it, this is the only time, wherein the Devil will tell them the truth. Now,

he hides all, under false and glozing appearances : he shews the sinner nothing but the pleasure, or the profit, or the credit of the sin to which he tempts him : but, then, he will throw off this mask, and appear to him, as he is, plain Devil. Men are often afraid, lest they should meet the Devil in some terrible shape ; lest he should make himself visible unto them : but little do they think, that he is always with them, and at their right-hand : he goes along with them wherever they go ; observes whatever they do ; gathers matter for temptation, out of every thing they converse with. And all this pains he takes, only that he might satisfy his malice in accusing them, and bringing witness against them, at the Last Day ; and therefore, certainly, he will then urge it home with the greatest spite and aggravation that can be.

That is a Third Witness, that shall appear at the Last Day.

iv. OTHER MEN also shall then bring in witness against them.

And what a world will there appear !

1. *All those, with whom they have sinned ; their brethren in iniquity.*

These shall then, with direful exclamations, accuse one another of all the wickednesses, which they have done in partnership together. Did the drunkard or the riotous person believe, that those, whom he now calls his good companions, shall hereafter be his bitter accusers ; that, in this great Day of Judgment, they shall, with mutual curses and execrations, call for wrath and vengeance one upon another ; certainly, this would damp their mirth, break their wicked crew, and strike their excessive cups out of their trembling hands. Here, sinners shall accuse one another : the one, for enticing ; the other, for consenting. They shall witness each other's guilt ; and, with a hellish malice, rejoice in one another's damnation. Go, now, with such a thought upon thee, and hug thy sinful companion, if thou canst,

2. *All those, against whom they have sinned, shall, at this day, appear, to witness against them ; whether it be against their spiritual or their corporal state.*

Thou, who, by thy evil example, hast encouraged others to sin, shalt, at this day, have them all come in to witness against thee ; and exclaim, with fearful outcries, “ Lord ! I had not been in this estate of wrath and damnation, had it not been for this man's example.” Thou, who art careless and remiss, in instructing, in exhorting, in reproving those, who belong to

thy charge, shalt have them all come in against thee: "Lord! we had not perished, had this man been careful to perform his duty to us; and, therefore, our blood lie heavy upon his soul for ever!" And, then, for temporal injuries, many are here wronged, who cannot right themselves against their powerful oppressors: but, at this day, the meanest shall have audience, and right done them against the greatest; and the oppressors themselves shall be oppressed, and sunk down to hell, by the accusations and witness of those, whom they have here wronged.

3. *Those, who have reproved and exhorted sinners in vain*, shall, at this day, witness against them and accuse them.

Every word of instruction or admonition, that hath been given you, shall then be witnessed to your faces, and your sin and condemnation aggravated by your slighting of them.

These Four Sorts of Witnesses shall then appear against you to accuse you: God, and your own Consciences; the Devil, and other Men. Their witness will be found true, and agreeing together. These will prove you guilty.

And what will you be able to plead, why sentence should not proceed against you? Truly, there is but one way, how, though you are accused by so many witnesses, you may yet escape condemnation; and that is, first of all, to accuse yourselves in an humble and penitent acknowledgment unto God. Say as much against yourselves now, as the Devil or your own Consciences can be able to say against you at the Last Day. This will invalidate their accusations; when all, that they can bring against you, you have confessed unto God long before. And you have that promise, too, for your assurance: he, that judgeth himself, shall not be judged: 1 Cor. xi. 31. And so, he, that with true godly sorrow accuseth himself for his sins, though he shall be accused also at the great bar; yet, all those accusations shall not condemn him.

These will be the witnesses, who will, at the Last Day, come in against us.

IX. In the next place, let us consider what PLEAS and DEFENCES men will then make for themselves; and the INVALIDITY of them.

Indeed, in strict propriety of speech, I think there shall be no such thing as fending or proving, as we use to phrase it. It

will be with sinners, as it was with him, who was found at the wedding-supper without the wedding-garment: they shall be all stricken speechless; and, like guilty malefactors, hang down their heads under that heavy doom, which shall then pass upon them, without once daring to lift them up, in alledging any thing in their own defence or excuse. Reprove men now, and their constant custom is, either to deny, or extenuate, their faults. This lessening of sin is of as great antiquity, as the committing of it: no sooner did Adam sin, but he seeks out for fig-leaves, to cover his spiritual, as well as his corporal nakedness; and lays the blame upon his wife; and she, again, upon the serpent: so it is still in this world: no man will father his own guilt: the vilest sinners stand peremptorily upon their own justification; and, as dogs, so they, with their own tongues, strive to lick off that dirt which sticks upon them. But, in this great day, every man's mouth shall be stopped and gagged. And there be Two things, which will then silence all the wicked of the world, that they shall have nothing to produce on their own behalf; and they are, Consciousness of Guilt, and Despair of Mercy. The former will shew them, how untrue; the latter, how fruitless, all the excuses, which they can then make, will prove: should sinners once open their mouths in their own defence, their very Consciences would rise up in their throats, and choke them: and, therefore, we have it, Rom. iii. 19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be guilty before God.* Or, should conscience give way, yet Despair never makes apologies: and the certainty of their condemnation, which the most of them shall then know, by having before felt it; and the rest, as self-condemned men use to do, by prejudging it; this despairing certainty, I say, will rather move them to curse and blaspheme their Judge, than to plead for or excuse themselves. Thus, if we speak properly, guilt and despair will tongue-tie every ungodly sinner at the great tribunal.

And, yet, the Scripture, where it gives us the most exact and particular description of this Day of Judgment, brings in wicked men defending themselves from the accusations laid in against them. So, Mat. xxv. where they are accused for not relieving Christ, when hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and imprisoned; to this charge they return a very pert and quick answer, ver. 44. *When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison?* So, Matt. vii. 22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy*

name? and in thy name...cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

It seems, therefore, that there shall, really, many pleas be made by wicked men, to keep the sentence of the judgment from passing upon them.

But the answer is easy. For these places are not to be understood literally; as if, indeed, they should put Christ upon proving his accusations, or should bring in any allegations for themselves. No, Conscience and Despair will, as I said, strike them all dumb.

But the Scripture thus expresseth it, for these Three Reasons.

i. That, hereby, it might PARALLEL AND ACCOMMODATE THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY, TO HUMAN COURTS OF JUDICATURE HERE BELOW.

Human judges are bound to hear what both parties can say; as well the defendant, as the plaintiff: otherwise, they must needs be unjust, in giving sentence without due information; although, perhaps, they may decree what is just. But, at this bar, there needs no canvassing of the question to inform the judge. But, yet, because this is the usual course in Courts of Justice here below; therefore, the Scripture, speaking of the great and last judgment, in conformity to these, mentions also the pleas that wicked men shall make for themselves; though, in strictness of speech, every mouth shall be then stopped, and every tongue cramped, but what shall be employed in judging and condemning themselves.

ii. Wicked men's pleas are mentioned in Scripture, that, hereby, MIGHT BE SET FORTH THE EXACT EQUITY AND CLEARNESS OF THAT GREAT TRIAL.

When we say, that men shall plead for themselves, the meaning only is, that God will be so just, that, in passing sentence upon them, he will consider, as well what may make for them, as what may make against them: their sentence shall be weighed out to them, as well according to the alleviating, as the aggravating circumstances of their sins: and it shall be as just and righteous, as if they had been permitted to plead all that possibly they could, on their own behalf. Thus, there are divers things spoken of this judgment, not as if they were really and properly to be transacted; but only to set forth the equity of God's proceedings therein. Rev. xx. 12. we have mention

made, of the opening of the books, out of which men shall be judged. Now it were very gross, hence to imagine, that there shall be any material books, out of which either God or his officers should read the indictment against sinners: but these books, here spoken of, are God's remembrance and men's own consciences, which shall then as punctually represent their works unto them, as if every circumstance had been carefully written down in a book. So, you have heard how many witnesses shall come in against sinners, and accuse them: neither is this to be understood literally; as if, indeed, all these should make a real appearance: only it denotes, that the trial of sinners shall be as just and legal, as if so many witnesses were sworn and examined against them. So, here, when we say, that wicked men shall bring in excuses for themselves at the Day of Judgment; or, when the Scripture brings them in, pleading, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty, or naked? Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, &c.* this doth not necessitate us to believe, that it shall be properly and literally thus fulfilled; but only intimates, that the judgment shall be as fairly and equally managed, as if every man were permitted to speak whatsoever he could produce for himself.

iii. The Scripture mentions their pleas, that, hereby, it MIGHT PRESCRIBE AGAINST AND CUT OFF MEN'S VAIN AND PRESUMPTUOUS HOPES.

And so it speaks rather by way of supposition, than affirmation. Almost every man hopes he shall be able to plead That, at the Last Day, which may be available to procure him mercy: now, suppose men were allowed to speak for themselves, and to produce in judgment what they now trust will stand them instead; alas! how much in vain would all be, that they can alledge! Those, who have enjoyed church-privileges, and have eaten and drank in Christ's presence; those, who have received spiritual gifts, and have prophesied and wrought miracles in his name: these rely upon this; and think this is enough to save them, in that Great Day; but, suppose they should plead all this, yet will the Judge say, *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* So that the mentioning of wicked men's pleas and excuses doth but shew, that what they trust to, and hope will bear them out in the Day of Judgment, will then be of no avail; but, notwithstanding all, sentence must pass upon them as *workers of iniquity.*

And, in this sense, I shall now speak of it; and shall shew you, that what pleas and excuses wicked men do now relieve themselves with, will then be found vain, and of no effect.

1. Many think that their *Ignorance* will be a good excuse for them, at the Day of Judgment.

What is more common, in the mouths of brutish and sottish people? God will not require more than he hath given: it is not expected from them, to do as others, who are more learned and knowing; and, though they have not such good words, yet they have as good hearts as the best: and, they hope, their good meaning will bring them to heaven as soon as others, whose heads are better stuffed, and whose tongues are better tipped, than theirs. And so they think, that there is no safer, nor easier, nor shorter way to get to heaven, than in the dark, hoodwinked and blindfold.

It is true, it is not necessary for every private Christian to busy and beat his head about the nice and curious questions of religion; which have always been disputed, and will never be decided, till our partial knowledge give place to perfect. We have sufficiently seen, what wild delusions and damnable errors men of weak intellectuals have run into, while they have employed themselves about the disputes, rather than the practice of Christianity: when men of shallow parts will boldly adventure to fathom deep controversies, they plunge themselves into an abyss of mistakes and errors, and are in the ready way to drown themselves in perdition. And yet, withal, it were to be wished, that Christians did not look upon all that is disputed against by men of perverse minds, as uncertain to be known, and unnecessary to be practised.

Some things, in Christian Religion, are fundamental and vital; the ignorance of which excludes from all possibility of salvation. And such are the doctrines of Repentance from dead works; of Faith in our Lord Jesus; of the common and daily Duties of a godly life. He, who knows not, that sin is to be repented of, that Christ is to be believed in, that the duties of holiness and obedience are to be constantly performed and good works to be maintained, cannot possibly be in any capacity of salvation. The knowledge of these things is necessary, not only *necessitate Præcepti*, by the necessity of God's command, which requires them; for, so, is every thing in Scripture necessary, either to be known or done: but *necessitate Medii*, they are necessary, as Means to the obtaining of an end, and without

which it cannot possibly be obtained. No man can be saved, unless he repent and believe; and no man can repent and believe, if he be utterly ignorant what repentance, and faith, and God, and Christ, are. Such ignorance, in whomsoever it is, is damnable. So, Ps. lxxix. 6. *Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen, that have not known thee, &c.* And the Prophet Isaiah makes such ignorance to be so far from an excuse, that it is the very reason why God will not spare nor pity them: Isa. xxvii. 11. *It is a people that hath no understanding: therefore, he, that made them, will not spare them; and he, that formed them, will shew them no mercy.* And, yet, how many are there, who know not what Repentance, or Faith, or God, or the Gospel, means! who know not Christ's person, nor his offices; his merits, nor their own misery; what he hath purchased for them, nor what he requires from them! and, yet, if they know that there is a heaven, hope to go to it too! Believe it, such are in no more capacity of salvation, than the very Heathens; nay, in a far worse condition, inasmuch as the Heathens never could, but They might attain to the saving-knowledge of a Saviour, were it not for their own wretched and wilful sloth. Ignorance of fundamental truths and vital duties will be so far from an excuse, that it will be brought in as one killing part of their indictment; and, certainly, most forlorn and desperate must that man's case needs be, whose best excuse is of itself a damning sin.

Other things there are, in Christian Religion, that appertain not to the vitals, but to the vigorous, flourishing, and beautiful state of holiness, both in the heart and life. And such are, a competent knowledge and insight into the more abstruse mysteries and remote duties of the Gospel. There are many truths revealed in Scripture, and some duties commanded; the ignorance of which, we dare not but say, may be consistent with true grace. The disciples of Christ himself, before his ascension, knew not many things, which yet were of great concernment to be known, and of great influence into practice.

But, do not presently conclude, that, certainly, your ignorance is of this kind: an ignorance of such things as are merely mysterious, and of no absolute necessity, either to be known or done, in order to salvation: and, therefore, though you fail in many things, yet that this will serve for your excuse, at the Last Day.

For this ignorance is Twofold ; either

Invincible ; and that is, indeed, an excuse for sin : or
else,

Wilful and affected ; and that is so far from being an
excuse, that it is a dreadful aggravation of it.

An Invincible Ignorance is such, as is conjoined with an
impossibility, in an ordinary manner, of right information ; and
it ariseth only from Two things :

Absolute want of necessary instruction. Or,

Want of natural capacity to receive it.

If you are deficient in either of these, then, indeed, ignorance
might pass for a tolerable excuse for many faults, at the Day of
Judgment. And, indeed, it doth not only excuse *à tanto*, as is
commonly held ; but *à toto* : for, where there can be no sufficient
declaration of the law, it is all one as if there were no law ; and,
where there is no law, there is no transgression. And, therefore,
as I said above, no sins shall be charged upon Heathens, but
such as the Law of Nature and right Reason doth condemn.

But, certainly, your ignorance cannot be invincible, nor
pleaded by you as an excuse : for,

First. Have you not the means of knowledge plentifully
dispensed amongst you ?

When you have frequent instructions, Scriptures unfolded,
truths inculcated, duties pressed and urged, it must be mere
industry, that can keep you ignorant. If you see not the light,
it is because you love darkness : if you know not the things of
God, it is because you say unto him, *Depart from us, for we
desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

Secondly. Are you destitute of natural capacities of wit and
understanding, to apprehend the truths of God and the mysteries
of salvation, when they are delivered to you ?

Thou, who art as knowing for the world, as others ; what is
the reason thou art not as knowing for heaven ? Dost thou not
enjoy the same means ; the same instructions, advice, and ad-
monitions ? and why, then, so ignorant in spiritual concern-
ments, and yet so politicly wise in worldly affairs ? Why ! but
because men wilfully close up their eyes, and stop their ears ;
lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts, and so spoil a good excuse
against the Day of Judgment ?

But, alas ! this excuse will not hold good, at that day. If

men will not see, when the light shines round about them; if they will not know, but refuse instruction, when the means of knowledge is dispensed to them; this blindness and ignorance is so far from lessening, that it will exceedingly heighten and greaten, both their sin and their condemnation. Drunkenness is no excuse of a fault, but an aggravation; because, though the drunkard knows not what he doth, yet he wilfully deprives himself of the use of his own reason: and so a sin, that is committed through wilful and affected ignorance, is made two thereby. And, certainly, if that servant was to be beaten with many stripes, who knew his master's will, but did it not; with many more shall he be beaten, who knew not his master's will, but might have known it.

And, therefore, think not to plead ignorance for your excuse. Believe it, pleaded it shall be, but not by you; but, by the Devil and your own consciences, against you.

That is the First vain Excuse.

2. Many rely upon their *Civil and Reproachless Lives*.

They neither debauch themselves, nor wrong others: and, if they were called before man's judgment-seat, nothing could be charged upon them; and therefore, certainly, they hope to escape at God's tribunal, which is not so severe and unmerciful as man's is. But, let them know, that this negative righteousness will nothing avail them, so long as it is baffled by their unbelief: for there is an immutable law, that fixeth an eternal doom upon every man: *He, that believeth.....shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned*: Mark xvi. 16.

3. Many rely upon a *Comparative Righteousness*.

They glory, with the bragging Pharisee, that they are not extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as other men; and, therefore, they hope, that, as they have not lived the same lives, so they shall not partake of the same condemnation. But, alas! God will not judge thee, by comparing thee with other men, but with his Law: thou fallest far short of the holiness and perfection of that, even in those very actions, wherein thou dost far transcend other men: it may be, there is no comparison between thee and others; but then there is no comparison between thee and the Law: thy very excellencies may, at this day, be judged deficiencies; and thyself, a surpasser of others, wilt be then judged as a transgressor against God. And, yet, if a comparative happiness will content thee, this, possibly, thou mayest have

for thy comparative holiness: yea, but this is no relief, no comfort; for this comparative happiness thou mayst have in hell itself: those, who have been holy, in comparison with the wickedness of the lewd and debauched world, shall also be hereafter happy, in comparison with the intolerableness of their torments; and, yet, thou mayest be a miserable damned wretch for all this.

4. Others rely upon *their own Righteousness, and the Merit of their own Good Works.*

They doubt not, but, if God would set their good against their bad, they should stand upright in judgment; and think, that, take one time with another, God hath been no loser by them: if, at one time, they have provoked him; at another, they have appeased him: if they have wronged him, by sins; they have again recompensed him, by duties. Foolish creatures! who think to discharge debts by duties; and satisfy God's justice with that, which they owe to his sovereignty: this is but robbing one of God's attributes, to pay another. Hadst thou never offended justice; yet all the good, which thou canst perform, is due to God's sovereignty, as he is thy Creator and Highest Lord: justice requires not obedience, but punishment; nor will it be satisfied with any kind of punishment, but what is, like itself, infinite: and, therefore, though you should deal out all your estates in alms; though you should drop tears night and day; though you could make rivers by weeping, and raise storms by sighing, and pray till your tongues cleave to the roof of your mouths; though you should fast yourselves to ghosts, and macerate your bodies with the most rigid and sharp penances that ever blind devotionists practised, and, after all, give them to be burned; yet all this could not be put into the balance against the least of your sins. For, whatsoever you can either do or suffer, is due or not due, is required by God or not required. If it be due, it cannot be satisfactory: the payment of one debt cannot cross out another. If it be not due, it cannot be acceptable: it is but will-worship; false and adulterate coin, (and much of this sort is among the Papists) that bears not the stamp of divine authorization upon it, and therefore will not be received, nor pass for payment. Not that I would drive you from performing duties: God forbid! but, from trusting in them. Let me ask you, to what purpose is it, that you keep up something of religion? to what purpose, that you frequent public ordinances? that you

force your ears to hear that word, which yet prophesieth no good concerning you; and task your lips to say over those prayers, in which yet you find no relish? is it not the secret thought of many men's hearts, that hereby they shall buy off guilt and escape condemnation? if this be your hope, let me tell you, it is no better than a spider's web; and, when the besom of destruction comes, it will sweep down such cobweb-hopes as these are, and such as settle in them, into perdition. For, those very duties and works, which many trust unto to save them, may, at this day, for the slight and hypocritical performance of them, be reckoned up against them as so many sins: so far from being expiations, that they may rather be their faults: there, will be no setting the good against the bad; for the manner of performing that, which is good, turns it into filth and abomination in the sight of God; and all they do, is either sin in itself, or sinful. And, therefore, to plead your own righteousness and your own good works, is but to plead that, the defects and hypocrisy of which will be brought in against you, to condemn you.

5. Many most presumptuously rely upon *the Merciful and Gracious Disposition of God*; and bottom their hopes of safety, in that Great Day, only upon this presumption.

In spite of Scripture, and threatenings, and judgments, they will not believe, but that the world is only scared out of its wits, by representing God more terrible and severe than indeed he is. What though the Law hath threatened death to transgressors, and the Gospel to unbelievers; and they are both: yet they will think, that God hath still reserved in his hands a power to relax this rigorous sentence, and to dispense with and pardon whom he pleaseth; and they hope they shall be of that number. Strange sinners these! who are resolved upon it, that God shall shew them mercy, though he himself hath protested the contrary; and will not be beaten from it, but that their souls are dearer to God, than his own truth. And, therefore as it were on purpose to blast such foolish hopes, where divine mercy is displayed in the greatest glory that ever it was, God brings in the severity of his justice to equal it: so, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*: now after all this triumph of mercy, to dash the hopes of wicked men, it is added, a God *that will by no means acquit the guilty*. Carnal reason might possibly

think it a contradiction, that God should proclaim that he will pardon sin; and yet, by no means, acquit the guilty: for what else is pardon, but an acquittance of those who are guilty? But here is no contradiction: the guilty, whom God will pardon, are the penitent and believing sinners, here upon earth: the guilty, whom he will by no means pardon, are the finally impenitent; those, who shall be found under guilt, at the Day of Judgment. Though there shall stand millions of wretched creatures, wringing their hands, tearing their hair, rending heaven and earth with their outcries; enough, even to move those very rocks to compassion, which they shall then call upon to hide and cover them: yet this God, who is all bowels and love, and whom wicked men do preposterously fancy so merciful; yet this merciful God will only mock their fears, flout their tears, and laugh at their cries, and send them all to hell with scorn; that Christ, who so far gratified the petition of the very devils, as to send them into the herd of swine, rather than back to hell, their place of torments; though all the wicked world should fall down at his feet, and beg him, by his death, his blood and passion, by all that he hath either done or suffered, to shew them mercy, (powerful arguments, if now used, to prevail) yet these powerful arguments shall not then incline him, either to pardon them, or, in the least, to mitigate their doom. No, *this is the acceptable time: this is the day of salvation.* As soon as this life is expired, the time of believing and repenting is expired too; and the time of mercy and pardon, with it. When Christ shall sit as Judge, it will be then too late to cry, "Mercy! mercy!" Mercy hath been already tendered, and proudly rejected. Sinners! why was it not embraced while you lived upon the earth: while you were entreated and beseeched to accept it? It is now in vain to call, or cry, or strive: God hath sworn in his wrath, that not one of them shall enter into his rest.

6. Many ignorant persons think, that they will plead to God, *that they are his Creatures, and the Workmanship of his own Hands.*

They will never believe, that the infinitely gracious God will damn, what himself hath made; and destroy the work, which his own hands hath framed.

But,

(1) What think you? Have not the Devils as good a plea as this?

Are not they God's creatures, and the work of his hands, as

well as you? Nay, are they not more costly and exquisite pieces of the creation, as being mighty spirits, than you, who are but vile dust? If God must, therefore, in justice save you, because you are his creatures, must he not save them too? Certainly, this plea gives sinners but poor hopes, which only proves, that, if they be saved, so must the very devils.

(2) Let the Scripture beat off men's hands, from grasping this reed.

Doth not God expressly say, Prov. xvi. 4. *he made all things for himself, and the wicked for the day of wrath?* In vain is it to plead, "He made me, and therefore will save me." If thou remain wicked, God made thee for the day of wrath and destruction: so, Isai. xxvii. 11. *He, that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he, that formed them, will shew them no favour.*

Nay,

(3) Wicked men are not so much to be accounted God's workmanship, as the Devil's.

God doth not so much ascribe the workmanship of the Man, unto himself, as the workmanship of the New Man. Are you sanctified and renewed? then are you, indeed, God's workmanship: Eph. ii. 10. *We are his workmanship, created.....unto good works.* But, while men continue in their sinful state, though God made them, yet they are the Devil's workmanship: he is their father, and they his offspring. God's workmanship was made like God; but that image is defaced, and the perfect resemblance of the Devil stamped upon the souls of wicked men. And, therefore, in destroying them, God doth not so much destroy his own image, as the brood of Satan.

This, therefore, is no ground of hope, nor plea for mercy.

7. It will then be in vain, to plead *Church-Privileges and Ordinances, or Spiritual Gifts and Endowments.*

Christ hath told us, that many shall come to him with open mouth, in the Last Day, "*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name....cast out devils? and in thy name done many mighty works? Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets? And must we be sentenced to the same hell, with those, who never heard thee preaching? with those, whom thou never heardest praying?*" A specious plea! yet, if this be all, he will command them away into everlasting fire: *Go, ye cursed.* The kingdom of heaven here upon earth, I mean, the Visible Church, for so the Scripture often calls it, admits of many wicked men and

hypocrites into communion with it: they enjoy the same ordinances, partake of the same sacraments; but, at this day, will be made the great separation, when the members of the Kingdom of Heaven shall themselves be shut out of the Kingdom of Glory: so saith our Saviour, Matt. viii. 12. *The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.*

8. Some may think to alledge, for their excuse, that *they wanted Time to prepare for Eternity.*

Their employments in the world are such, that they have not leisure to think of their soul's welfare: providence hath set them in a most cumbersome calling; and the cares and business of this world flow in so fast upon them, that they drink up all their thoughts, and sequester all their time. As the Duke D'Alva, being demanded whether he observed a comet that had lately appeared, "No," said he, "I have so much to do on earth, that I cannot spare time to mind heaven:" so it is with many: they are overwhelmed with worldly employments, and have no spare time to think of heaven; and therefore hope, that God will not expect so much from them, as from others who are better at leisure. But, it were happy for these men, if, as they pretend, they cannot spare time to be holy, so they could not spare time to die, and to be judged. It is true, men may make their trades and callings too unwieldy for them; and thereby become, not masters, but drudges to their own affairs: they have not time for natural and necessary refreshments; and what time, then, think you, for divine and heavenly duties? what time for prayer or meditation, when the world is still crowding in upon them? those, who have little else to do, find it a hard task to work their hearts to a ready performance of these; and how much more they, who have always some pretence from their callings, to neglect them! However, it is the greatest folly in the world, and can be no excuse at the Last Day, to grasp so much of earth, as to let go their hold of heaven. Men should, therefore, so model and size their worldly employments, as to make daily room for religion. And, let them know, that, if these their employments be either such or so numerous, as are not consistent with a godly life; this is not a calling, but a temptation, and as such to be avoided. It will not be an excuse, but an aggravation, of men's doom at the Last Day, that they, who have lived forty or threescore years in the world, could yet find no time for heaven; as if the laying up of a vain and perishing estate here below were of more concern, than the

laying up *treasures in heaven*, and a good foundation against the time to come.

Thus we see how vain and frivolous those many excuses, that men may think to make at the Day of Judgment, will then prove. Let me hence only draw one Practical Inference, and so conclude. Since, then, no excuse will prevail, to keep off the dreadful sentence of judgment, Oh! then! let no excuse prevail, to keep us from a holy life. Let no excuse keep us from coming to Christ, since no excuse can help us when we come before Christ. When our Saviour invited his guests, they all made excuses: one had bought a farm, and another oxen, and they could not come. Poor excuses! but yet any thing is sufficient to reject Christ's invitations. But, though men make excuses when Christ invites them, no excuses shall serve the turn when he summons them. The ministers of the Gospel, when they knock at men's hearts and bid them come to Christ, are turned off with very slight answers: but, pray bethink yourselves, what excuse, what answer you will make, when an angel shall come into the grave to you, and knock at your coffins, and bid you arise, and come to judgment. It were well for many, if they could then excuse themselves from appearing; or else, at their appearing, excuse themselves from their guilt and condemnation. But no excuse will then be taken. I beseech you, consider, that, in that day, and that day is coming, nothing will avail you but Faith and Obedience: and, as you would plead it then, so be persuaded to practise it now.

x. The Tenth and last General to be treated on, in handling this subject, is, the PRONOUNCING and EXECUTING OF THE SENTENCE, which shall be the last decision of our eternal state.

And that is Twofold: either of absolution, or of condemnation; either, *Come, ye blessed*; or *Go, ye cursed*. These two sentences shall proceed and the execution of them be proportioned, according to the difference of men's lives and works. All shall come forth, saith our Saviour: *they, that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they, that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*: John v. 29. And this, the text expresseth to be a receiving according to what we have done in the body; *whether it be good or bad*. So, Rev. xx. 12. *The dead were judged..... according to their works*.

For the more distinct prosecution of this particular, there are two terms in the text, which require a more exact consideration: the one, is that proportioning term, *according*: the other, is that of *receiving*; which, being here peculiarly spoken of the Day of Judgment, must necessarily imply the receiving, either of a blessed reward, or of a deserved punishment.

If we consider the former term, *According to that he hath done*: this may admit of a Twofold Distinction.

First Distinction. Men shall be judged according to their works: either *quoad speciem operum*; or, else, *quoad diversum gradum in eadem specie*: either

According to the different Kind of their works; or else,
According to the different Degrees of them, in the same kind.

Second Distinction. According to our Works, may denote, that the recompence of our works, shall be proportioned, either

According to their own merit; or else

According to God's Covenant and Agreement with us.

Third Distinction. And, if we consider the Reward and Punishment, which we shall receive according to our works; this also is either

Partial and incomplete; or, else

Perfect, and entire.

Out of these distinctions thus premised, I intend to form my following discourse.

i. Therefore, the last definitive sentence shall pass upon all ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS; that is, either ACCORDING TO THE KINDS, OR THE DEGREES of them.

1. Though, in a natural respect, there be various and numberless *Kinds* of works: yet in morality, there are but two especially; and they are, Good and Bad.

Concerning indifferent actions, the text takes no cognizance; nor shall I, at present, meddle with them: for, indeed, there shall no such actions be found at the Day of Judgment; but those, which are different in themselves, are determined, and made good or bad, by their circumstances; and, as such, shall be accounted for at the Last Day.

Now, in these two great kinds, of Good and Bad, which divide between them whatsoever is done in the world, there are

several degrees and advances. They are not all like Jeremiah's figs; the good, incomparably good; and the evil, excessively evil: but some good actions are better, and some bad are worse, than others. And this difference proceeds; in godly men, from the mixture of corruption with grace, whereby they cannot do the good they would; and, in ungodly men, from conscience or some more external restraint, whereby they dare not do the evil they would.

Now, that a different sentence shall proceed upon men at the last, according to the different kinds of their works; that those, who have done good, shall receive good, and those, who have done evil, shall accordingly receive evil; is so clear, that he must be a very atheist, and destroy the foundation, not only of the Christian, but of all religion, (for all religion is built upon this belief) who shall go about to deny it. I need not quote Scripture, though it be in nothing more abounding than in this. The very first springings of natural light, and the unpremeditated resolves of reason, dictate this to be an unquestioned truth. For, from whence proceed those pale fears and grim thoughts, those heart-smittings and stinging regrets, which sometimes pierce and rack the souls even of the most wicked wretches, but from a sad apprehension, that the Great God will recompense unto them evil for evil? which apprehension they are not disputed into, by any far-fetched arguments and long consequences; but it strongly masters their understandings and consciences, by its own downright and native evidence.

2. Leaving them, therefore, to the horror of that reflection, let us, in the second place, consider the proportioning of the last sentence, *according to the several Degrees of good and evil that shall be found in men's works.*

Herein, something is probable, and something demonstratively certain.

(1) It may very piously and profitably, and with great probability, be believed, that there shall be a distribution of different degrees of glory, according to the different exercise of grace and holiness in this life.

Learned men are at some variance, in this particular. The most affirm it: and others do not indeed so much deny it, as they do, that there is any thing in Scripture upon which we may fix a firm and sure persuasion, that it shall be so; and among these, are Peter Martyr, and Spanhemius, and Cameron. Those,

who are for the affirmative, alledge, Matt. v. 19. He, that breaks the least commandment, shall be the least in the kingdom of God. To this it is answered by others, that the Kingdom of Heaven here, may be well taken for the Kingdom of Grace in the Church on earth; and so to be *least* in it, infers no inferiority in glory: or, if it be taken for the Kingdom of Glory; yet, that to be *least* in it, implies here a total exclusion from it. That parable, Matt. xxv. of the different rewards according to the different improvement of the talents, is produced to favour a difference in degrees of glory: those of the contrary persuasion say, that, if parables be in this case argumentative, they may well oppose that other parable, Matt. xx. against degrees of glory, where each of the labourers received a like reward, though for different labour: each man had his penny; as well he, who came in at the eleventh hour, as they, who had borne the heat and burden of the day. Again, it is pleaded, from I Cor. xv. 41, 42, where the Apostle saith, that as *one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead*; that, therefore, there are degrees of glory: but to this it is truly replied, that the Apostles speaks not there concerning the difference between one glorified body and another; but of the difference that is in one and the same body, between its state of corruption before, and incorruption after, the resurrection: *As one star differeth from another star in glory, so doth the body differ when it is raised, from what it was, when it was sown*. It was sown a corruptible body, it is raised incorruptible, &c. Many such arguments are alledged, and many such answers are shaped to them. Which of these two is the very truth, I shall not presume positively to determine. Only, to me, it seems more according to the plain and obvious sense of the Scriptures, that there shall be different degrees of glory, as a correspondent reward unto men's different works of grace: not only that our good works shall receive a good recompence; but that, according to the exalted measures of goodness that is in them, such, likewise, shall be our exaltation in the heavenly kingdom; where, possibly, there shall be no parity, as there is no confusion. And, possibly, this may be intimated, I Cor. iii. 8. where the Apostle tells us, that *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*.

But, howsoever, whether there shall be such a difference or not, we may make a Twofold good Use of it.

[1] If there shall be different degrees of glory, how should this excite us to strive after an Eminency in Holiness!

Certainly, it is a commendable and a worthy ambition, to covet the highest place in heaven; to desire to sit next to cherubims and seraphims: nay, if it were possible, to get the same place in heaven, which St. John, the beloved disciple held here on earth, to lean in the very bosom of Christ himself. If increase of grace will proportionably increase glory, what Christian will be so ill a husband, as not to put that grace to use, that shall at last bring him in so great interest and advantage? To be continually in the exercise of holiness, is to be continually adorning our own crown, and setting new gems into it: it is but to irradiate our diadem of stars, with a lustre that shall outshine the sun in its brightness; and to make that glory ponderous and weighty, the least measures of which are in themselves precious and inestimable.

[2] If there shall be no different degrees of glory, but all shall be of the same pitch and stature; think then, O Christian! what infinite comfort it will be, that, though now thy graces are weak, thy fears perplexing, thy corruptions restless, thy temptations violent and impetuous; though now thou seest thyself excelled by many, whom thou admirest, and fain wouldst imitate: yet, at this day, the same sentence shall absolve thee, the same heaven receive thee, the same glory crown thee, as shall absolve, receive, and crown the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, the most eminent and singular Saints, for ever. So that, whether you are persuaded, that there shall be different degrees of glory in heaven or not; yet it yields matter of Motive, or of Comfort.

But, to leave this,

(2) It is certain, that the last sentence and the execution of it shall be proportioned, according to the different degrees of evil, of which wicked men shall be guilty.

The Scripture is express for this: Luke xii. 47, 48. *He, which knew his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he, that knew it not, that is, if his ignorance of it be invincible, shall be beaten with few stripes:* so, Mat. xi. 22, 24. *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrha, in the Day of Judgment, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida.* Every vessel of wrath shall, indeed, be brimful; but some vessels shall contain much more wrath than others: God shall, on purpose, widen and enlarge their capacities, that he may pour into them much more of his fury and indignation,

who have deserved more at his hands. Indeed, the wrath, nay the least frown of an Almighty God, is able to sink the stoutest of his creatures into nothing. But, herein, is the dreadful severity of God seen, that the more power he will put forth in punishing them, the more power he will put forth in supporting them; and will, as it were, hold them up in one hand, while he scourgeth them with the other.

And, if there shall be such a difference of punishments in hell, according to the difference of crimes here on earth, oh then! what desperate folly and madness are most wicked men guilty of, who so go on, adding iniquity to iniquity, as if they were resolved, a single damnation should not content them! Is it, that they despair of mercy, and think that it is but in vain for them to scruple sinning, who are sure of condemnation? why, though they had ground for such a despair, which no man hath, who will speedily repent and be converted; though they had heard God swear aloud, in his wrath, that they, of all men living, should never enter into his rest: yet, it is a degree beyond all madness, for men therefore to aggravate their damnation, because they cannot escape it. Believe it, the least degree of God's everlasting wrath is an intolerable hell: and what do you else, by demeriting additional degrees by your repeated sins, but heap up many hells for your torments; and heat the infernal furnace, into which you must be cast, sevenfold hotter than else it would be? There is not the smallest part of torment which the damned now suffer, but, were they for a while reprieved and let out of hell, they would do more to escape, than the most holy and laborious Christians do to obtain all heaven itself. All this I speak upon supposition: for, assurance of salvation there may be, but of damnation there cannot be, in this life: and, yet, were it supposed that men could be assured that their souls were cut out on purpose to make firebrands for hell; yet, hereupon, desperately to harden themselves in sin, what were it else, but to set these brands a-burning at both ends? what were it else, but, because they must be prisoners, to strive what they can to deserve the dungeon?

Thus, then, we have seen how men must be judged according to their works: both as to the Kinds of them, which are good or evil; receiving the good of salvation according to the good of obedience, and the evil of damnation according to the evil of sin: and, likewise, according to the Degrees of their works, in each kind: and I have shewed it to be probable, that, of those,

whose works have been more holy, the glory shall be more excellent; and to be certain, that of those, whose works have been more sinful, the punishment shall, accordingly, be more intolerable.

ii. The Second Distinction premised was this: That, to be judged according to our works, may denote, that the recompence of our works shall be made, either AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN INTRINSICAL WORTH AND MERIT; or, else, AS THEY ARE CONSIDERED IN GOD'S COVENANT AND AGREEMENT MADE WITH US; which covenant promiseth a blessed reward to our good works, and threateneth a severe punishment to our evil works.

And, here, I shall briefly lay down these Two Positions.

1. *Wicked men shall, in this Great Day, be judged according to the proper demerits of their own works.*

And what that is, the Apostle informs us, Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death.* And, certainly, God will not be unjust, in withholding deserved wages from any of the workers of iniquity: but, because they have not as yet received any thing in proportion according to their deserts, therefore divine justice reserves it for them in hell. The heaviest punishments which they can endure upon earth, be they outward torments or inward horrors, are but small drops and foretastes of that full cup of wrath and trembling, that God will put into their hands, and force them to drink of for ever. And, therefore, look what Christ suffered for believers, what wrath, fears, and agonies met upon him, as the desert of the sins of those in whose place he stood; the same shall all wicked and ungodly men bear in their own persons: yea, and possibly much more, inasmuch as there is no dignity in their persons to take off from the degrees of their punishments, as there was in him: it was more satisfactory to justice, for a Divine Person, who was God as well as Man, to suffer less, than it can be for such contemptible creatures as men are, to suffer more: and, therefore, if ever any wicked man was affected with a deep sense of what Christ underwent, let him know, that those sufferings do but represent, as in a map, how great and insupportable his shall be, when God shall come to render unto him according to his doings. And, yet, let me add this too, that still there is more demerit in their sins, than the utmost extremity of punishment can reach: sin is an infinite evil; and doth, in itself, merit every way infinite punishment,

infinite in intention as well as extension, in degree as well as duration: yea, the least sin, in itself, deserves as much or more wrath, than the greatest is punished with; so that the very damned themselves may, with truth, say, that they are punished less than their iniquities deserve. It is not possible for a finite creature to bear the full strokes of an infinite justice: and, therefore, God limits his justice within the compass of their limited natures; and brings it to a stint infinitely below their deserts, and yet infinitely above their patience to endure. Oh, how much cursed malignity is there in sin! those sins, which rash and foolish man plays and dallies with; that lay him under as much wrath as can be heaped upon him, and deserve infinitely more!

That is the First Position: Wicked Men shall be judged according to the Desert of their Works.

2. *Believers shall be judged according to their works; not considered in their own desert, but as considered in God's gracious covenant and agreement made with them.*

In strict propriety of speech, merit connotes the dueness of the reward to our actions, antecedently to any compact, or promise made to reward them. Now, if we consider the holiest and best works of the holiest and best Christians, they are only acceptable and rewardable with eternal life, as they are under God's gracious promise in Christ; and therefore cannot be, in themselves, meritorious: and, if we consider them as abstracted from this promise, they are so far from being rewardable with life, that they are punishable, for the defects of them, with eternal death. God, indeed, is become a debtor to our faith and obedience; but St. Augustin well resolves us how: *Deus debitorem se fecit, non aliquid accipiendo, sed liberaliter promittendo*: "God hath made himself a debtor, not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising liberally to us:" and, so, he is a debtor rather to his own word, than to our works. This, therefore, is the unspeakable happiness of true believers: their weak and imperfect works, if done in faith and sincerity, shall, through Christ's merits and God's promise, be as fully rewarded, as if they were perfect and unspotted obedience.

iii. We must DISTINGUISH OF THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, which men shall receive according to their works: for that is either PARTIAL and INCOMPLETE; or, else, PERFECT and ENTIRE: the one is to be received at every man's particular, the other at

the last and universal judgment: according as we ourselves are, either partial or complete, so will be our recompence.

1. Before the Resurrection and General Judgment, only one part of man is capable either of glory or torment; and that is his soul. That, therefore, I call *a partial reward*, that *crowns but a part of man*; and that *a partial punishment*, which is *inflicted but on a part*, viz. the separate soul. The bodies, even of those, whose souls shall be as far distant as heaven and hell, must lie down and sleep together in the same common bed of earth: the saints, whose souls now shine in heaven as the sun in the firmament, if we ransack their graves, we shall not find their dust more glittering than others; nor are the carcasses of those sinners, whose souls now burn as firebrands in hell, more black and sooty. The bodies, therefore, of men, shall not receive according to what hath been done in them, until the consummation of all things. Only some few exceptions the Scripture hath noted; as Enoch, Elias, and (as St. Augustin in one of his Epistles supposeth) those saints who were raised at Christ's death, who have already received their entire happiness

Indeed, as when Christ lay in the grave, there was still the continuance of the hypostatical union between his dead body and his everliving Godhead; so is there a continuance of the mystical union between the dead bodies, yea between every scattered and loose dust of the saints, and the glorious person of Jesus Christ. Now this, though it be an exceeding great honour, yet we cannot so much reckon any part of the reward, as an assurance of the whole: for, because the bodies of the saints, while separated from their souls, are yet united by an invisible and ineffable band to their Saviour; therefore, do they now rest in hope, and shall hereafter arise in glory: *Because I live, ye shall live also*: John xiv. 19: and, *of all, which the Father hath given me, I must lose nothing, but must raise it up again at the Last Day*: John vi. 39. Christ's miraculous resurrection was performed within three days after his death; but his mystical resurrection shall not be until the end of the world: when the saints of all ages shall together rise out of their graves, then riseth Christ's mystical body: and to this very end shall it rise, that the saints, being themselves complete and entire, may then receive a complete and entire happiness; that, as they have on earth glorified God both in body and soul, so in heaven both body and soul may be glorified with God. It is worth ob-

serving, how gradually God leads his people into the possession of glory ; as if he would inure them to bear such an exceeding and eternal weight, as the Apostle calls it, by lifting smaller parcels of it beforehand : and, therefore, in this life, they only receive *the earnest of their inheritance*, which are the graces and comforts of the Spirit : Eph. i. 13, 14 : at death, they receive vast incomes of glory, as much as their souls alone can contain : yet this is but only part of payment, upon which they live splendidly, until the resurrection of their bodies and the process of the general judgment : and, then, as the body shall again receive its soul, so both soul and body shall together receive their full reward ; the uttermost farthing of all that Christ hath purchased, the Gospel promised, or themselves expected. So is it, also, with wicked men : sin and the terrors of a guilty conscience are the earnest of hell, in this life : the torments of the separate soul are part of payment : but, still, justice is behind-hand with them, till the resurrection of their bodies ; and then shall they receive the full measures of wrath, pressed down and running over. And, indeed, it is but meet, that these bodies should be consorts with the soul in receiving, as they have been in doing, good or evil.

2. Now, what this *consummate reward and punishment* shall be, is altogether inconceivable.

(1) The Complete Reward, which is reserved for believers, is inconceivably glorious.

It is that, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard ; neither hath it, or can it, enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those that love him ; scarce thoroughly apprehended by the blessed themselves : and, therefore, for us, who are yet at distance, to attempt a description, were but to sully and diminish it. And, therefore, as God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, is better known to us by negatives than affirmatives, by what he is not than by what he is ; so also is heaven : you may best conceive it, when we tell you, there shall be nothing to fright, nothing to afflict, nothing to grieve, nothing to lessen the highest, fullest, sweetest delight and satisfaction, that the vast and capacious soul of man is able, either to receive or to imagine : there, we shall be freed from all the cares and sorrows, the pains and miseries of this life : we shall be got above the reach of Satan's temptations, and out of the danger of his fiery darts : we shall be above the clouds of despondency

and desertion : there, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes ; and all sin, the cause of those tears, rooted out of our hearts : and there, finally, we shall neither want any thing that we would have, nor desire any thing but what we have. Add to this, the infinite happiness of our vision and fruition of God : we shall there see the Father of Lights, by his own rays : we shall see the Sun of Righteousness, lying in the bosom of the Father of Lights : we shall feel the eternal warmth and influence of the Holy Ghost, springing from both these lights : there, you shall see God no longer darkly through a glass, but face to face ; without interruption, without obscurity : and, if it now cause such joy, when God doth but sometimes beam in a half-glance of himself into the soul, oh ! then, within what bounds can our joy contain itself, when we shall fix our eyes upon God's, and lie under the free and unchecked rays of the Deity beating full upon us, and be ourselves made strong enough to bear them ? there, we shall corporeally approach nigh unto Christ's glorious body, and put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hands into his side ; and search and sound those blessed fountains, from whence flowed forth his blood and our salvation : there we shall for ever converse with innumerable hosts of holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect ; and join with the assembly of the first-born Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and holy Martyrs of all ages, since the beginning of the world ; and, with infinite delight, mutually rehearse the mercies of the Great God, and sing his praises : there, we shall perpetually exult in the smiles of God, and live in eternal ecstasies and raptures ; such as we never knew what they meant, no not when we were here most spiritual. And, when God hath wound off time from its great bottom, when he shall sound the Resurrection, and summon to Judgment ; then, shall our happy souls meet their expecting bodies, with unspeakable joy and vital embraces : these lumps of clay shall be refined and clarified : the glories of the soul shall shine through them ; and they themselves shine with a lustre, clear as the sun in its brightness. And, then, both soul and body shall enter into the entire fruition of those joys, the greatness of which we cannot express, but only by saying, we know not what they are. This is the inconceivable Reward of the Godly.

(2) As the reward of the godly shall be inconceivably glo-

rious; so the Doom, that shall pass upon all the Wicked and Ungodly of the world, shall be unspeakably full of terror.

And this doom contains in it a Twofold Punishment: the one, privative; the *Pæna Damni*, or Punishment of Loss: the other, positive; or *Pæna Sensûs*, the Punishment of Sense. The inflicting of these two will be the full execution of the last sentence upon them.

[1] As for the Punishment of Loss, we may consider it, either in respect of those things, which once they had; or in respect of those things, which they might have had, had it not been through their own wilful default.

1st. If we consider their loss in regard of the things which once they had, so it is Twofold: for they have lost that, which they counted their happiness; and they have lost that, which might have made them truly happy.

(1st) They lose that, which they accounted their happiness: that is, the world; the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world.

These are the things, which send many to hell; but do not descend with them thither, to relieve and comfort them there. Dives riots, on earth; but, in hell, cannot obtain one poor trembling drop of water, to cool his flaming tongue. Tell me, what will it avail you, that you have lived in all affluence and voluptuousness? The time is coming, when these things shall be no more, or no more yours. And, oh, then! tell me, what sad losers will those men be, who have lost their souls to gain the world; and yet must, at last, lose the world together with their souls!

(2dly) They shall be punished with the loss of that, which might have made them truly and eternally happy, had they been wise to improve it.

Here, God strives with them by his Word, by his Spirit, by his Patience, by his Providence: he follows them from day to day, from ordinance to ordinance; with threatenings, with exhortations, with promises, with expostulations: *Why will ye die? Turn ye, and live: for, as I live, saith the Lord, I delight not in the death of him that dieth*: yea, God sends his Spirit to strive with them; sets on conscience to fright them; and all to reduce them: and this might have proved their salvation, had they wisely managed it. But, in hell, all this too is lost: there, no day of mercy riseth upon them; no patience, nor long-suffer-

ing; no awakening providences, nor converting ordinances; nor any possibility of a better estate. And, certainly, if there be any reflection in hell, that will cut the soul to the quick, it will be this: that once it enjoyed such fair opportunities and overtures for heaven, but neglected them; and now hath lost them for ever, for ever, without hope. Thus they shall lose what they once enjoyed.

2dly. Their greatest loss is of those things, which they might have enjoyed: and that is, in a word, whatsoever happiness and glory the saints stand possessed of in heaven.

(1st) They lose the presence and enjoyment of God, which is the very heaven of heaven itself.

Indeed, heaven is not heaven, without him; and hell could not be hell, were God there. It is true, God is present with the damned in his essence, for, *if I descend into hell*, saith the Psalmist, *thou art there*; and he is present, by his power, to torment them: but the comfortable presence of God they are for ever cut off from. And, oh! for the soul to be cut off from God, is as great a loss, as for the stream to be cut off from the fountain, or a beam to be cut off from the sun. And, yet, this is the sentence of that Great Judgment, *Depart from me, ye cursed*. Depart from thee, Lord, who art every where! oh! whither shall we flee? happy were it for us, could we depart from thee, where thou art not; but most wretched and accursed, that we must depart from thee, and yet be where thou thyself art: withdraw the presence of thy wrath and power, or vouchsafe the presence of thy love and favour, and it will be no hell whither thou sendest us. It is not so much the exquisite torments, as the loss of God's gracious presence, that makes hell unsufferable: were but God's gracious presence with them, the damned could lie down in everlasting flames, as comfortably as in beds of roses: but, to be deprived of those glorious communications of God which the saints enjoy, when they see him face to face, without obscurity; when they enjoy him continually, without interruption; when they delight in him eternally, without satiety; this is a loss, as the joys themselves are, altogether inconceivable.

(2dly) They lose all that additional glory, which the saints possess: a glorious habitation, the palace of the Great King: glorious society, saints and angels, yea and Christ himself: glorified bodies, sparkling with the radiancy of spiritual qualities.

This is that loss, which wicked men must, in the Great and Last Day, sustain.

[2] As for the second part of their Punishment, which is that of Sense, our Saviour briefly sums it up in Two things: the worm, that never dieth; and the fire, that never goeth out: Mark ix. 44: within, the worm gnaws them; and, without, the fire burns them.

1st. Conscience is this never-dying worm, which shall eternally sting and torture them.

And this is their misery, that they themselves must be their own merciless tormenters. Those, who have but in this life lain under the horrors of despair, sadly know what an inexorable tyrant conscience is: how many doth it now force, in the extreme anguish and horror of their souls, to cry out, They are damned, they are damned! Oh! then, what anguish will it cause in hell, when they shall pronounce themselves damned, and not lie; and have nothing of hope or possibility left to mitigate it! Every sin, which they have committed, shall, like so many vipers, crawl about their hearts, and gnaw them through to all eternity. And the fretting review, that conscience will take of them, shall give them no rest night nor day: "Here I lie burning for ever, for gratifying a base lust, for pleasing my brutish part but for a moment. Ah! fool, where are those sins, those pleasures, which I prized above heaven, and ventured hell for? What remains of them all, but the anguish and horror? And have I thus sold my soul for nothing? and am I thus irrecoverably lost? O Conscience! thou stingest too late; too late, now, for any thing but my torment. These thoughts I should have had while I lived, while I was tempted to such and such a cursed sin: then had they been seasonable; but now too late, Conscience, too late for ever!" Thus the never-dying worm shall sting them. But,

2dly. The unquenchable Fire shall burn them.

This shall be their doom, *Depart from me, ye cursed.* Whither? *into everlasting fire.* It is a fire so elevated, as shall be able to work upon the soul itself; and so tempered, as it shall not be able to consume the body. It is a darksome, gloomy fire; that torments by its scorching, but yields no comfort by its light. The Scripture calls it a furnace of fire, to shew its rage and fierceness; and a lake of fire and brimstone, to shew its vastness. Imagine you saw a sea of molten brimstone set on fire,

and vomiting forth black and sooty flames, and thousands of wretched creatures plunging and wallowing in it, and you have some resemblance of what Hell is.

This is the complete and final reward of all impenitent sinners, which they shall receive, according to their works.

Thus I have, in a scanty manner, opened unto the reader the Doctrine of the Last Judgment. As we must, at the Last Day, so we have, in this discourse, seen the Judge sitting upon his throne, and all the world arraigned before him. We have heard what course of law God will proceed by: and what sentence shall be pronounced; of infinite joy to the good, *Come, ye blessed*; of inconceivable terror to the wicked, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*.

And now, this great assembly breaks up. Heaven throws open its gates to entertain Christ, marching in triumph before all his elect: and hell enlargeth itself to swallow up devils and damned wretches; who, loaden with a most heavy doom, shall sink down into that bottomless pit for ever and ever.

And now, what shall I say? Have I yet need to add any thing that may aggravate the terror of this Great Day? Methinks, fear and astonishment should shake every heart before the Lord. The very devils quake and tremble under a dreadful expectation of this day: and shall devils tremble, and yet sinful man be fearless? ay, and confident? Be astonished, O Hell! at this; that hell itself hath not such daring and undaunted sinners, as are upon earth! Do you think you shall live for ever? death is insensibly stealing away your breath; and, after death, comes judgment: and, then, believe it, you shall hear the last sentence pronounced otherwise than in books and sermons. Now, you put far from you the evil day; but this day will come appareled all over with horror and affrightment on every side. That day is a day of wrath; a day of trouble and heaviness; a day of gloominess and darkness; a day of clouds, storms, and blackness; a day of the trumpet and alarm. The sun shall be darkened, the moon turned into blood, and the powers of heaven shaken: the stars shall fall as withered leaves: the graves shall vomit up their dead: the heavens shall be shriveled, and the elements molten. And then, Sinner! bear up, and be as stout as thou canst. But, certainly, did men but believe these things, it could not be that they should harden themselves in sin, as they do: could iniquity so abound in the world? would there

be such rank and rotten discourse in every mouth, such oaths and curses, such riot and excess, such filthiness, villany, injustice, rapine, and oppression; did men believe, that the day is coming, wherein they must give a strict account for every idle word and vain thought? for whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad?

For shame! therefore, let us either for ever strike it out of our creed, and profess that we do not believe, that Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead, or live better. Let that exhortation of the Apostle take place with us, (with which I shall conclude) 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God; wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.

MUSCELLANEOUS REMAINS

DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE USE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

COL. iii. 16.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM.

THIS Epistle, if any other, is a rich mine of heavenly treasure; and abounds, both in the discovery of Gospel Mysteries, and the injunction of Christian Duties. It is furnished throughout with that, which may either instruct us in knowledge, or direct us in practice: and the Apostle, having already laid down many excellent things in order to both these; and seeing it would be an endless task to discourse unto them all the truths, or exhort them to all the duties of religion in particular; therefore speaks compendiously in the words of my text, and refers them to the perfect system in which is contained an account of what a Christian ought to know or do; and that is the Holy Scriptures: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*

I. The WORDS OF THIS EXHORTATION are very full, and laden with weighty sense.

We may resolve them into Two parts.

The Nature and Substance of the exhortation, which is to a diligent study and plentiful knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

The Manner how we ought to be conversant in them: so that they may *dwell in us richly in all wisdom.*

i. In the FORMER, we may take notice,

1. That *the Scripture is called the Word of Christ*; and that, upon a double account: both because he is the *Author* that composed it; and, likewise, because he is the *Subject Matter* of which it principally treats.

Read -
9th Oct: 18th
Little Stone

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Now though, in both these respects, the Scriptures of the New Testament be more especially the Word of Christ; yet, also, may the Scriptures of the Old Testament as truly and properly go under his name.

For,

(1) He is the Author of them all.

He may well write this title upon our Bibles, "The Works of Jesus Christ." All the Prophets, before his incarnation, were but his amanuenses; and wrote only what he, by his Spirit, dictated to them: 2 Pet. i. 21. *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*: and, certainly, the Holy Ghost inspired them by Christ's authority and commission; and what he declared, he took from him, and shewed it unto them: John xvi. 14. *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

(2) Christ also is the principal Subject and Matter of the Whole Scripture.

The sending of Christ a Saviour into the world, is that great business, which hath employed the counsel of the Father, the admiration and ministration of Angels, the tongues and pens of Prophets, Apostles, and Holy Men of all ages, before the Scriptures were written, when revelation or tradition was yet the only positive rule for faith and practice.. The Patriarchs saw him by these: *Abraham...saw my day, and was glad*: John viii. 56. Afterwards, the people of the Jews saw him by types, promises, and prophecies recorded in the Scriptures: he was that excellent theme, which hath filled up many chapters of the Old Testament. As the first draught of a picture represents the features and proportion of the person, but afterwards are added the complexion and life to it; so is it here: the pens of the Prophets drew the first lineaments and proportion of Christ, in the Old Testament; and the pens of the Apostles and Evangelists have added the life and sweetness to it, in the New. Yea, Christ is so truly described in the Old Testament, by his life, by his death, by all the greater remarks of either, that, in his contest with the Jews, he appeals thither for a testimony: John v. 39. *Search the Scriptures; for....they are they which testify of me*: and St. Peter, Acts iii. 24. affirms, that *all the prophets...as many as have spoken, have...foretold of these days*: and, Acts x. 43. *To him give all the prophets witness*. Christ, who is the true expositor, being himself the true author, makes them all speak his sense: Luke xxiv. 27. *Beginning at Moses and all the pro-*

phets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the sayings concerning himself. So that St. Chrysostom's observation holds true, that the Gospel was in the world before Christ: ἐρρίζωθη μὲν ἐν τοῖς βιβλοῖς τῶν Προφητῶν, ἐβλάστησε δὲ ἐν τῷ κηρυγματι τῶν Ἀποστόλων: "It took root in the writings of the Prophets, but flowed forth in the preaching of the Apostles."

So that, in both these respects, the Holy Scripture may well be called the Word of Christ; of Christ, as the Author, and as the Subject of it.

2. And, in both these, lies couched a very cogent argument, that may enforce this exhortation of the Apostle, and excite to a diligent study of the Scriptures.

For,

(1) Is Christ the Author of them; and shall we not with all care and diligence peruse these books, which he hath composed?

The writings of men are valued according to the abilities of their authors: if they be of approved integrity, profound knowledge, and solid judgment, their works are esteemed and studied. And shall we not be much more conversant in these, which are set forth by the Author, who is Truth itself and the Essential Wisdom of the Father? these, that were dictated by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and writ, as it were, with a quill of the Heavenly Dove?

(2) Christ is the Subject of the Scriptures: and what is all other learning and knowledge but beggarly elements, if compared with this?

Here, we have the cabinet of God's counsels unlocked; the eternal purposes of his grace, in sending his Son into the world, publicly declared: here, we have the stupendous history of God's becoming man, of all the miracles which this God-Man did upon earth, and of all the cruelties which he suffered: here, we have the description of his victory in his resurrection, of his triumph in his ascension, of his glory in his session *at the right-hand of the Majesty on High*: surely, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory; as the Apostle with admiration recounts it, 1 Tim. iii. 16: and of all these wonderful passages, the Scripture gives us a perfect narrative. And what have the great wits of the world ever treated on, like this; either for strangeness or truth? all their learning is but idle and contemptible speculation, compared to this great mystery of a Crucified Saviour; who

subdued death by dying, and, without force, converted the world to believe a doctrine above reason. It was a very odd saying of Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, cont. Marc. and yet there is something in it that strikes, *Natus est Dei Filius: non pudet, quia pudendum est*; "The Son of God was born: we blush not at it, because it is shameful." *Mortuus est Dei Filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est*: "The Son of God died: it is credible, because it is unfit and unlikely it should be so." *Sepultus resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile est*: "He rose from the dead: it is certainly true, because it is impossible." Now these unlikely and impossible things, judged so by human reason, these deep things of God, the Scripture declares; and declares them in such a manner, as convinceth even reason itself to assent to them, though it cannot comprehend them. If, therefore, you desire to know Christ and him crucified, and those mysterious doctrines which the wit of man could not invent, for it can hardly receive them, be conversant in the Holy Scriptures: for they are the word of Christ; and reveal all the wonders of wisdom and knowledge, to which all the wisdom of the world is but folly.

This, therefore, I suppose, lies in the expression, *the Word of Christ*: viz. the Word, of which he is both the Author and the Subject.

ii. We may observe, in the text, the MANNER, how we ought to be conversant in the Scriptures: and that is set forth very significantly.

1. Let the word of Christ *dwell* in you.

Do not only give it the hearing, as a strange and marvellous story. Let not the memory of it vanish out of your minds, as soon as the sound of the words vanisheth out of your ears; but lay it up and lodge it in your hearts: make it familiar and domestic to you; that it may be as well known to you, as those that live in the same house with you. Read it, ponder and meditate upon it, till you have transcribed the Bible upon your hearts, and faithfully printed it in your memories.

2. Let it dwell in you *richly* or copiously.

Which may be taken, either objectively or subjectively.

Objectively. And so the sense is, that all the word of God should dwell in us. Content not yourselves with some part of it: that you read the Gospel, or New Testament, but neglect the

Old; as is the practice of some flush notionists: or, that you know the historical part of both, but neglect the doctrinal; which is the fond and childish custom of some, who read the Scripture as they would romances, skipping over the moral discourses as impertinent to the story. But the word of Christ dwells in us *richly*, when we receive the whole doctrine contained in it, and are diligent in revolving the Prophets, Evangelists, Apostles, every part and parcel of the heavenly-revealed truth.

Again, the word of Christ may dwell in us *richly* in the latter sense, or Subjectively. And so it doth, when not only every part of it dwells in us, but when it dwells also in every part of us: in our memories, to retain it; in our minds, to meditate on it; in our affections, to love it; and in our lives, to practise it. Then doth the word of Christ dwell richly, or abundantly, in us.

3. Let it dwell richly *in all wisdom*.

The highest wisdom is, truly to know and to serve God, in order to eternal life. Now, saith the Apostle, so acquaint yourselves with the Scriptures, that you may from thence learn true wisdom; the saving knowledge, both of what is to be believed and what is to be done, in order to the obtaining of everlasting happiness. To be conversant in it so as only to know what it contains, is not wisdom but folly. But then it dwells in you *in wisdom*, when you study it, to practise it; when you endeavour to know the rule, that you may obey it. This is wisdom, here; and will end in happiness, hereafter.

And, thus, you have the words of my text explained.

II. In handling this subject, I shall only pursue the design of the Apostle, and endeavour to **PRESS THOSE EXHORTATIONS** upon you.

And, indeed, I need not many arguments to persuade those, who have already any acquaintance with these sacred oracles, still to be conversant in them. Have you not yourselves found such clear light, such attractive sweetness and persuasive eloquence in the words of God, that all, which the tongue of man can utter for it, falls infinitely short of what it speaks on in its own behalf? Who of us have not found direction from it in cases of difficulty, solution of doubts, support under afflictions, comfort under sadness, strength against temptation, quickenings of grace, warmth of affection? and, in brief, whatsoever we could

expect from the mercy of God, have we not found it in the Scriptures? And shall we need further to commend it to you by arguments, since it hath commended itself by manifold experiences?

But, so it is, that the Devil knows we are disarmed and disabled, if once he can wrest *the sword of the Spirit* from us, as the Apostle calls it; and therefore labours all he can, to strike the Bible out of our hands: or, if we do read it, he strives to put on such false spectacles, as shall misrepresent every thing to us, and possess us with prejudice and objections against it.

i. I shall, therefore, before I proceed any farther, ENCOUNTER WITH SOME OF THOSE PREJUDICED OPINIONS, WHICH MAKE THIS A CLASPED AND SEALED BOOK TO MANY.

1. Some may fear, *lest the study and knowledge of the Scriptures should only aggravate their sin and condemnation.*

On the one hand, the precepts of the Law are so various, the duties so difficult, and flesh and blood so infirm and opposite; that they cast a despairing look at them, as impossible to be fulfilled. On the other hand, they have been told that knowledge, without practice, will expose them to damnation without excuse: they have read, James iv. 17. *To him, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*: it is an emphatical and weighty sin: and, Luke xii. 47. *He, that knew his master's will, and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes*: this they have read, and this deters them from reading any farther: if they cannot practise what they know, and if to know and not practise be only to inflame their last reckoning and to make their torments more intolerable, it is best for them to muffle up themselves in a safe ignorance.

To this I answer,

(1) Though the word abounds with multitudes of sublime precepts and difficult duties, yet this is no discouragement from the study of it.

For, consider, that this same word is not only a light to discover what you ought to do, but a help to enable you to do it. It is the very means, that God appointed to overcome your averseness, and assist your weakness. And, if ever this be effected, it must, in an ordinary way, be, by conversing with the Scriptures. That sick man hath lost his reason, as well as his health, who should refuse to take physic, because, if it doth not work, it will but make him the worse: the way to make it

work is, by taking it. So, it is a distempered kind of arguing against the Word of God, the physic of our souls, that it is mortal and deadly, if it doth not work into practice: the way to make it work into practice, is, to take it first into our knowledge. It is true, it were a great discouragement, if the Scripture only shewed you how much work you have to do, what temptations to resist, what corruptions to mortify, what graces to exercise, what duties to perform; and left all that upon your own hands: but the leaves of the Bible are the leaves of the Tree of Life, as well as of the Tree of Knowledge: they strengthen, as well as enlighten; and have not only a commanding, but an assisting office.

And this the Scripture doth Two ways.

[1] It directs where we may receive supplies of ability, for the performance of whatsoever it requires.

It leads thee unto Christ, who is able to furnish thee with supernatural strength, for supernatural duties: his treasury stands open for all comers; and his almighty power stands engaged to assist those, who rely upon it. Be not discouraged, therefore: he, who finds us work, finds us strength; and the same Scripture, that enjoins us obedience, exhibits God's promise of bestowing upon us the power of obeying: thou, who workest *all our works in us*, and for us: Isa. xxvi. 12: and, *Work out your own salvation... For it is God, which worketh in you both to will and to do*: Phil. ii. 12, 13. Why then should we so complain of hard sayings and grievous commandments? Have we not God's omnipotence, obliged by promise to assist, in the same words, wherein we are commanded to obey? What saith the Apostle? I am able to *do all things through Christ* strengthening me: Phil. iv. 13. When, in reading the Scripture, thou meetest with difficult and rigorous duties, the severity of mortification, the self-cruelty of plucking out right-eyes and cutting off right-hands; commend thyself to those promises of aid and assistance, which the same Scripture holds forth, and lift up thy heart in that divine meditation of St. Augustin, "Lord, give what thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest." Whilst thou thus duly dependest on Christ's strength and makest use of thine own, it is as much his honour and office to enable thee, as it is thy duty to perform what he requires.

[2] The Scripture, as it directs us to rely on the strength of Christ; so it is a means, which God hath appointed, to quicken

and excite our own strength and power, to the discharge of those duties which it discovers.

Wherefore are those pressing exhortations and those dreadful threatenings, every where so dispersed up and down in the Book of God, but that, when we are slow and dull and drowsy, the Spirit may, by these, as by so many goads, rouse us, and make us start into duty? Such a spiritual sloth hath benumbed us, that, without this quickening, we should not be diligent in the work of the Lord: and therefore David prays, Ps. cxix. 88. *Quicken me....so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.* But yet it is also the word itself, that quickens us to the obedience of the word: Ps. cxix. 50. *Thy word hath quickened me:* and, indeed, if you can come from reading the word, that so abounds with promises, with threatenings, with rational arguments, with pathetic expostulations, winning insinuations, importunate intreaties, heroic examples propounded to our imitation, with all the persuasive art and rhetoric which it becometh the Majesty of the Great God to use; if you can read this word, and yet find from it no warmth of affection, no quickening to duty; let me tell you, you either read it without attending to it, or else attend without believing it. It is, therefore, no discouragement from searching and studying the Scripture, that its commands be many and difficult; for it directs you whither to go for promised strength: and, the more you converse with it, the more will you find your hearts quickened to a due obedience of it.

That is the First Answer.

But, then,

(2) Whereas many think that it is better not to know, than not to practise; we must here distinguish of Ignorance.

Which is of too kinds; either invincible, or else affected.

Invincible ignorance is such, as is conjoined with and proceeds from an utter impossibility of right information: and it ariseth only from Two things.

Absolute want of necessary instruction: or,

Want of natural capacity to receive it.

Affected Ignorance, is an ignorance under the means of knowledge; and always ariseth from the neglect or contempt of them. Such is the ignorance of those, who do or may live where the Gospel is preached, and where by pains and industry they may arrive to the knowledge of the truth.

Now, here, for ever to answer this objection, and to shew

you how necessary knowledge is, I shall lay down these Two particulars.

[1] I grant, indeed, that Unpractised Knowledge is a far greater sin than Invincible Ignorance, and exposeth to a much sorer condemnation.

Hell fire burns with rage, and meets with fuel fully prepared for it, when God dooms unto it a head full of light, and a heart full of lusts: those, who know God's will, but do it not, do but carry a torch with them to hell, to fire that pile which must for ever burn them. We have a common proverb, that Knowledge is no burden: but, believe it, if your knowledge in the Scripture be merely speculative, and overborne by the violence of unruly lusts, this whole Word will be no otherwise to you, than the burden of the Law, as the Prophets speak; a burden, that will lie insupportably heavy upon you for ever: better far you were born under barbarism in some dark corner of the earth, where the least gleam of Gospel light never shone, and where the name of Christ was never mentioned, than to have this weighty book, a book which you have read and known, hung about you to sink you infinitely deeper in the burning lake, than a mill-stone hung about you can do in the midst of the sea. What St. Peter speaks of Apostates, 2 Pet. ii. 21. is but too well applicable to the knowing sinner: *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn aside from the...commandment delivered unto them.* How! better not to have known it? Why! is there any possibility to escape the condemnation of hell, without the knowledge of the way of righteousness revealed in the Scriptures? no; damnation had been unavoidable without this knowledge; yet it had been better they had not known it: for here is the hyperbole of their misery; better they had been damned, than to have known these truths and this rule of righteousness, and yet turn from the obedience and practice of it. O fearful state! O dreadful doom! when a simple and genuine damnation shall be reckoned a gain and favour, in comparison of that exquisite one, which God will with all his wisdom prepare, and with all his power inflict, on those, *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they, which commit such things, are worthy of death, do, notwithstanding, persevere in them: He, that knew his master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes: Luke xii. 47. and, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but*

now they have no cloke for their sin, saith our Saviour, John xv. 22. The sin and punishment of those, who are invincibly ignorant, is as nothing compared to what the knowing sinners lie under.

But, do not flatter yourselves: your ignorance is not invincible. Are you not called to the knowledge of Christ? do you not read or hear the Scriptures? do you not enjoy Gospel-Ordinances and Ministry? may you not, if you will be but diligent and industrious, understand what you are ignorant of? Certainly, there is nothing, that can prove your ignorance invincible, unless it be your obstinacy, that you will not be prevailed with to be instructed by all the means of instruction. Your ignorance must, therefore, be affected.

[2] Well, then, attend unto the Second particular. Affected Ignorance is a greater sin, and will be more sorely punished at the Day of Judgment, than Unpractised Knowledge.

This kind of ignorance is so far from being pleadable as an excuse, that it is an aggravation of men's guilt, and will be so of their condemnation. There be but two things, that complete a Christian; knowledge and practice. Both these God doth strictly require. Knowledge may be without practice; but the practice of godliness cannot be without knowledge. God, I say, requires them both. Now judge ye which is the greatest sinner: he, who labours after knowledge, though he neglect practice; or he, who neglects them both: he, who fulfils some part of God's will; or he, who fulfils nothing of it. Certainly, in your own judgment, this latter deserves to be doubly punished: once, for not doing his duty; and, again, for not knowing it, when he might. Truly, it is but just and righteous, that God should, with the highest disdain and indignation, say unto them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not*; since they have audaciously said unto him, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. The Apostle, speaking of God's patience towards Heathens, who were invincibly ignorant of the truth, tells us, Acts xvii. 30. that *the times of this ignorance*, and yet an ignorance it was that put them upon no less than brutish idolatry, *God winked at*: ignorant persons in ignorant times, whilst as yet the world was destitute of the means of knowledge and darkness overspread the face of it, God connived and winked at; but ignorant persons in knowing times, God doth not wink at, but frown upon. I am the more earnest in pressing this, because

I perceive that that vile and rotten principle, unworthy of a Christian who is a child of light and of the day, is taken up by many, That it is no matter how little we know, if we do but practise what we know: what a cheat hath the Devil put upon them! hath not God commanded you to know more, as well as to practise what you know? is it likely you should practise what you know upon God's command, who will not upon his command increase your knowledge? And yet this is the usual plea of profane men: ask them why they frequent the public ordinances so seldom, they will tell you, they know more by one sermon, than they can practise: but how can such make conscience of practising, who make none of knowing, though the same God hath enjoined them both? Yea, though they cannot practise what they know, yet let me tell them, that, for those, who live under the means of grace and may be instructed if they will, it may be as great a sin to omit a duty, out of neglect of knowing it, as out of neglect of doing it: yea, and much greater: we should ourselves judge that servant, who, while we are speaking to him, stops his ears on purpose that he might not hear what we command him; we should, I say, judge him worthy of more stripes, than he, who gives diligent ear to our commands, although he will not obey them. So it is, in this case: thou, who stoppest thine ears, and wilt not so much as hear what the will of thy Lord and Master is, deservest much more punishment, than he, who takes pains to know it, although he doth it not: it is damnable, not to give God the service which he requires; but, O insolence! not to give God, thy Lord and Master, so much as the hearing! hath God sent man into the world, and sent the Scriptures after, as letters of instruction what we should do for him here; and will it, thinkest thou, be a sufficient excuse, when thou returnest to thy Lord, that it is true thou hadst instructions, but never openedst them, never lookedst into them? what a fearful contempt is this cast upon the Great God, never so much as to enquire what his will is! whether or no he commands that, which is fit and reasonable for us to perform! And, therefore, refuse not to search and study the Scriptures, upon pretence that the knowledge of what you cannot fulfil will but aggravate your sin and condemnation: for, be assured of it, greater sin and sorer condemnation can no man have, than he, who neglects the means of knowledge, thereby to disoblige himself from practice: and, again, the Scriptures were given to assist us in the performance of those duties, which

they require from us: they do not only inform the judgment, but quicken the will and affections, and strengthen the whole soul to its duty.

And this is in Answer to the First Objection.

2. Some will say, that *the reading of the Scriptures possesseth them with strange fears, and fills them with incredible terrors.* It raiseth up such dreadful apparitions of hell and the wrath of God, as make them a terror to themselves.

To this I answer,

(1) It may be, thy condition is such as requires it.

Possibly, thou art in a state of wrath; and wouldst thou not be under the apprehensions of it? Thou art under the guilt of thy sins; and, then, no wonder that the voice of God should be terrible unto thee. It is most unreasonable to hate the word, as Ahab hated Micaiah, because it prophesieth no good concerning thee: alas! what good can it speak, so long as thou thyself continnest evil?

(2) It is not so much the Scripture, as thine own evil conscience, that haunts and terrifies thee.

When thou readest that dreadful threatening, Ezek. xviii. 4. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, there were nothing of terror in it, did not thy guilty conscience witness against thee, that thou art the man: it is this, that turns and levels all God's artillery against thee. Get, therefore, a conscience pacified upon good grounds; and the very threatening of the Word will speak to thee, not so much terror from the dreadfulfulness of the wrath and condemnation denounced, as joy, that thou hast escaped it.

(3) It may be, the Word of God, by working in thee the spirit of fear, is preparing thee for the Spirit of Adoption; for that, usually, ushers in this.

We find the gaoler trembling, before we find him rejoicing. There were mighty and rending winds, earthquakes, and fire, all terrible; before there came the still voice, in which God was, 1 Kings xix. 12: so God, in convictions, many times prepares the way by thunders and earthquakes, by the thundering of his word and the trembling of our own consciences, before he comes to us in the still and sweet voice of peace and comfort. And, certainly, they are much more afraid than hurt, whom God by his terrors thus frights into heaven.

3. But some may still say, *their fears are so strong, that they will drive them into desperation or distraction, if they longer pore on those dreadful things, which the Scripture contains.*

I answer, there is not one line or syllable in the whole Book of God, that gives the least ground for despair. Nay, there are the most supporting comforts, which a poor, fearful, trembling soul can desire: *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Come unto me, and I will in no wise cast you out. Return unto the Lord....and he will abundantly pardon:* Isa. lv. 7. *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out and forgetteth your sins;* and innumerable such like. Now, if men will only take *the Sword of the Spirit* to wound them, and not also the Balm of the Spirit to heal them, they may, through their own fault, especially when they read the Scriptures with the Devil's commentaries, fret themselves into despair.

4. Some may say, "*Certainly, it cannot be thus necessary, that the Word of Christ should dwell thus richly and abundantly in all Christians.* It is requisite, indeed, for ministers, whose calling it is to teach and instruct others, that they should have this abundance of Scripture dwelling in them; but, for us, who are to receive the law at their mouth, a competent knowledge in the fundamentals of religion may well be sufficient. We know, that Christ is the Son of God; that he came into the world to save sinners; and that, if we would be saved by him, we must believe in him: and such chief points of Christianity, which are sufficient to salvation."

To this I answer,

(1) God may well expect a more plentiful measure of the Word to dwell in ministers; because it is not only their general, but particular calling to peruse and study it.

There is, therefore, a twofold fullness: a fullness of the private Christian; and a fullness of the Treasurer or Steward, to whose charge the oracles of God are committed, and who is to communicate knowledge to the people. This being the minister's office, it is his duty, especially, to abound and to be enriched in the knowledge of the Scripture.

But,

(2) Wherefore must the Word of Christ dwell so richly in ministers? Is it for themselves only, or is it to instruct their flock?

What! And can it be necessary for them to teach, and yet unnecessary for you to learn? Are they bound to search into the depth of Gospel-Mysteries, to inform you of them; and is it enough for you, only to know the first principles and rudiments? Certainly, whatsoever God requires the minister to teach, that he requires you to learn. Now would you yourselves

judge the minister to have sufficiently discharged his duty, that should only in the general preach, that we are all sinners; that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save us; that the glory of heaven and the torments of hell shall be the rewards of obedience, or disobedience? if these few absolutely necessary and fundamental truths were all, you might well think the ministry to be a very easy or a very needless office. If, then, it is our duty to reveal to you the whole counsel of God, and to withhold nothing from you of all those mysteries which the Scripture contains, whereof some give life, others light, some are vital, others ornamental; you cannot with reason but conclude, that, if we are obliged to teach these things, you also are obliged to learn and know them.

(3) It is a most destructive principle, that many have, through sloth and laziness, taken up, That a little knowledge will suffice to bring them to heaven.

Certainly, God would never have revealed so many deep and profound mysteries in his Word, if it were not necessary that they should be known and believed. Shall we think all the rest of the Bible superfluous, except a few plain practical texts? What God hath recorded in the Scripture, is written for our instruction. It is true, if we have not the means of instruction, nor are in a possibility of attaining it, a less measure of knowledge, answered by a conscientious practice, may suffice for our salvation: but, for us, who have *line upon line and precept upon precept*, for us to satisfy ourselves with a few of the common principles, slighting the rest as nice and unnecessary points, for us to neglect knowledge, argues defect of grace; for, where-soever true grace is, there will be a most earnest endeavour to grow daily in both: and yet multitudes every where, even of those who abhor grosser sins, as swearing, drunkenness, and the like, yet take up with a few notions of religion, that all are sinners and all must perish, unless Christ save them, &c. This they knew, as soon as they knew any thing; and more than this, they will not know: they will not trouble their heads with any farther discoveries, nor look deep into the mysteries of godliness; contenting themselves that they have, as they think, knowledge enough to bring them to heaven. Let me tell them, that though, where there are not means of knowledge, a little may suffice for salvation; yet, where God doth afford plentiful means, the knowledge of those very things becomes necessary to them, which others might safely be ignorant of.

This is in Answer to the Fourth Objection.

5. Some may object, *that they have found, by experience, that the study of Scripture hath many times made them the worse: it hath alarmed their lusts, and put them in an uproar.* Such and such suits were quiet, till they read in the Word a command against them: therefore, they are discouraged, and think it best to forbear the study of the Scripture; since they find, that, by forbidding sin, it only rouses and awakens it.

I answer,

(1) This was St. Paul's very case: Rom. vii. 8. *Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.*

Now this effect is merely accidental, and is not to be imputed unto the holy Word of God, but to the wicked heart of man, which takes a hint (so desperately corrupt is it) from God's forbidding sin, to put itself in mind of committing it.

(2) Thou complainest, that the Word exciteth to corruptions; but it doth it no otherwise, than the sun draws smoke and stink out of a dunghill.

It doth not increase, but unhappily excites them: the very same lusts lay hid in the heart before: there they lay, like so many vipers and serpents, asleep, till the light and warmth of the Word made them stir and crawl about. And this advantage thou mayest make of it, that, when thy corruptions swarm thick about thee, upon the disturbance which the Law of God hath made among them, thou mayest thence see what a wicked heart and nature thou hast; how much filth and mud there lieth at the bottom of it, which presently riseth upon the first stirring; this may make thee vile in thine own eyes, and deeply humbled under the sad and serious consideration of thy indwelling sin: it is the very use, which the Apostle makes, in the same case: Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* When humours are in motion, we soon perceive what is the state of our body; and when corruptions are once stirred, we may thereby easily know the state and condition of our souls.

(3) The same Word, which doth thus occasionally stir up sin, is the best means to beat it down.

You may perceive by this, that there is somewhat in the Word, which is extremely contrary to your sins, since they do so rise and arm against it: their great enemy is upon them; and this alarm, that they take, is but before their overthrow. It may

be, the mud is only stirred that it might be cast out, and your hearts cleansed from it. Be not discouraged, therefore: for there is no means in the world, so apposite to the destruction and subduing of sin, as the Scripture; though, at first, it may seem, instead of subduing sins, to strengthen them.

6. Many are discouraged from studying the Scriptures, *because their memories are so treacherous and unfaithful, that they can retain nothing*: when they have read the Scripture, and would recollect what they have read, they can give no account of it, either to themselves or others. Nothing abides upon them: and therefore they think it were as good give over, as thus continually to pour water into a sieve; and inculcate truths upon such a leaky memory, where all runs out.

This is, indeed, the complaint of many.

But,

(1) This should rather put thee on a more frequent and diligent study of the Scripture, than discourage thee from it.

More pains will supply this defect: thou must the oftener prompt, and the oftener examine thyself, the more forgetful thou art. Memory is the soul's steward; and, if thou findest it unfaithful, call it the oftener to account. Be still following it with *line upon line and precept upon precept*, and continually instil somewhat into it. A vessel, set under the fall of a spring, cannot leak faster than it is supplied: a constant dropping of this heavenly doctrine into the memory will keep it, that, though it be leaky, yet it never shall be empty.

(2) Scripture truths, when they do not enrich the memory, yet may purify the heart.

We must not measure the benefit we receive from the Word, according to what of it remains, but according to what effect it leaves behind. Lightning, than which nothing sooner vanisheth away, yet often breaks and melts the hardest and most firm bodies in its sudden passage. Such is the irresistible force of the Word: the Spirit often darts it through us: it seems but like a flash, and gone; and yet it may break and melt down our hard hearts before it, when it leaves no impression at all upon our memories. I have heard of one, who, returning from an affecting Sermon, highly commended it to some; and, being demanded what he remembered of it, answered, "Truly, I remember nothing at all; but, only, while I heard it, it made me resolve to live better than ever I have done, and so by God's grace I will." Here was now a Sermon lost to the memory, but not to the

affections. To the same purpose, I have somewhere read a story of one, who complained to an aged holy man, that he was much discouraged from reading the Scripture, because his memory was so slippery, that he could fasten nothing upon it which he read: the old Hermit (for so as I remember he was described) bid him take an earthen pitcher, and fill it with water: when he had done it, he bid him empty it again, and wipe it clean that nothing should remain in it; which when the other had done, and wondered to what this tended, "Now," saith he, though there be nothing of the water remaining to it, yet the pitcher is cleaner than it was before: so, though thy memory retain nothing of the word thou readest, yet thy heart is the cleaner for its very passage through."

(3) Never fear your memory; only pray for good and pious affections.

Affection to the truths, which we read or hear, makes the memory retentive of them. Most men's memories are like jet, or electrical bodies, that attract and hold fast only straws or feathers, or such vain and light things: discourse to them of the affairs of the world, or some idle and romantic story, their memories retain this as faithfully as if it were engraven on leaves of brass; whereas the great and important truths of the Gospel, the great mysteries of heaven and concerns of eternity, leave no more impression upon them, than words on the air in which they are spoken. Whence is this, but only that the one sort work themselves into the memory through the interest they have got in the affections, which the other cannot do? had we but the same delight in heavenly objects, did we but receive the truth in the love of it, and mingle it with faith in the hearing, this would fix that volatileness and flittiness of our memories, and make every truth as indelible, as it is necessary.

That is in Answer to the Sixth Objection.

7. Others complain, *that the Scripture is obscure, and difficult to be understood*: they may as well, and with as good success, attempt to spy out what lies at the centre of the earth, as search into the deep and hidden mysteries, which no human understanding can fathom or comprehend. And this discourageth them.

To this I answer,

(1) It is no wonder, if there be such profound depths in the word of God, since it is a system and compendium of his infinite and unsearchable wisdom; that wisdom, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God.

Those deep truths, which your understanding cannot reach, require your humble veneration.

(2) The Scripture is suited to every capacity.

It is, as it is commonly expressed, a ford, wherein a lamb may wade and an elephant swim. And, herein, is the infinite wisdom of God seen, in wreathing together plain truths with obscure, that he might gain the more credit to his Word: by the one, instructing the ignorance of the weakest; by the other, puzzling and confounding the understanding of the wisest. This also adds a beauty and ornament to the Scripture: as the beauty of the world is set off by a graceful variety of hills and vallies, so is it in the Scripture: there are sublime truths, which the most aspiring reason of man cannot overtop; and there are more plain and easy truths, in which the weakest capacity may converse with delight and satisfaction: no man is offended with his garden, for having a shady thicket in it; no more should we be offended with the word of God, that, among so many fair and open walks, we here and there meet with a thicket, which the eye of human reason cannot look through.

(3) Those truths, which are absolutely necessary to salvation, are as plainly, without either obscurity or ambiguity, recorded in the Scripture, as if they were, as the Mahometans think concerning their Alcoran, written with ink made of light.

There, the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance for dead works, of a holy and mortified life, are so clearly set down, that scarce have there any been found so impudent, as to raise controversies about them: and is it not peevish, to quarrel at the Word for being obscure in those things, which if thou hast used thy utmost diligence to understand, the ignorance of them shall not at all prejudice thy salvation? Bless God, rather, that he hath so clearly revealed the necessary and practical duties of a Christian Life, that those are not involved in any mystical or obscure intimations; but that thou mayest, without doubt or dispute, know what is of absolute necessity, to be either believed or practised, in order to salvation. Be assured of this, that what with all thy labour and diligence thou canst not understand, thou needest not; and that what is needful, is plain and obvious, and thou mayest easily understand it.

(4) The Scripture is obscure: but hath not God offered us sufficient helps for the unfolding of it?

Have you not the promise of his Spirit to illuminate you?
1 Cor. ii. 10. *God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the*

Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. Have we not his Minister, whose office it is to instruct us, and lead us into the inmost sense of the Scriptures? Nay, have we not the Scripture itself, which is the best interpreter of its own meaning? usually, if it speak more darkly in one place, it speaks the same truth more clearly in another: compare Scripture with Scripture, and you will find it holds a light unto itself: the oftener you read and the more you ponder on those passages that are abstruse, the more you will find them clear up to your understanding. So that neither is this any reasonable discouragement from studying the Holy Scriptures.

8. Others may say, *they are doubtful, because they see many of those, who have been most conversant in the Scripture, perverted and carried aside into damnable errors, and yet still have pleaded Scripture for the defence of them.*

I answer,

True, the Devil hath, in these our days, busied himself to bring a reproach upon Scripture, through the whimsies and giddiness of those, who have pretended most acquaintance in it. But, let not this be any discouragement: for this ariseth not directly from the influence which the Scripture hath on them, which is the rule of truth only; but from the pride and self-conceit of a few notionists, who wrest it to their own perdition: and, though they boast much of Scripture to countenance their opinions; yet Scripture, misunderstood and misapplied, is not Scripture. Indeed there is no other way to discern truth from error, but only by the Scripture rightly understood; and there is no way rightly to understand it, but diligently to search it. But, to say that therefore we must not read the Scripture, because some wrest it to their own destruction, is alike reasonable, as to say, that therefore we must not eat nor drink, because that some eat to gluttony and others drink to giddiness and madness. The Apostle St. Peter tells us, 2 Epist. Chap. iii. v. 16, that, in St. Paul's Epistles, there were *some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction*: shall we therefore conclude, that neither his Epistle nor any other of the Scriptures should be read by us; because that, in some, instead of nourishment, they have occasioned only wind, flatulency, and ill-humours? If this had been his purpose, it had certainly been very easy for him to have said, "Because they are hard to be

understood, and many wrest them to their own destruction, therefore beware that you read them not:" but, instead of this, he draws another inference, ver. 17, 18. *Ye therefore, beloved..... beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord.....Jesus Christ:* he saith not, "Beware that you read them not," but, "Beware how you read them." This is the true apostolical caution, which tends not to drive us from the Scriptures, but to make us more studious and inquisitive in them, lest we also be perverted by the cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive. And this, the Primitive Parents thought the best and surest means, to preserve their people from error and seduction: it were almost endless to recite to you those many passages, wherein they do most pathetically exhort all, of all ranks and conditions, of each sex, of all ages, to a diligent perusal of the Holy Scriptures: and, so far were they from taking it up in a language unknown to the vulgar, or debarring the laity from reading it, that the translations of it into the common tongue of each country were numerous, and their exhortations scarce more vehement and earnest in any thing, than that the people would employ their time and thoughts in revolving them. It is therefore a most certain sign, that that Church hath false wares to put off, which is of nothing more careful than to darken the shop: and, assuredly, the wresting of the Scriptures by some who read them, cannot occasion the destruction of more, than that damnable idolatry and those damnable heresies have done, which have been brought into and are generally owned and practised by the Church of Rome, through the not reading of them.

ii. Thus you see, as it was in Josiah's time, how much dust and rubbish this Book of the Law lies under. I have endeavoured to remove it. And shall now proceed to those ARGUMENTS, WHICH MAY PERSUADE YOU TO A DILIGENT SEARCH AND PERUSAL OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The Jews, indeed, were so exact, or rather superstitious, in this, that he was judged a despiser of those Sacred Oracles; who did not readily know how often every letter of the alphabet occurred in them. This preciseness God hath made use of, to deliver down his Word to us, unvaried and uncorrupted. It is not such a scrupulous search of the Scripture, to which I now

exhort you: but, as God hath left it to us a rich depositum, a dear pledge of his love and care; so we should diligently attend to a rational and profitable study of it.

There are but two things, in the general, which commend any writing to us: either that it discovers knowledge, or directs practice; that it informs the judgment, or reforms the life. Both of these are eminently the characters of this Book of God. And therefore David tells us, Ps. xix. 7. The Law of God converts the soul, and makes wise the simple: it is a light, not only to our heads, but it *is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path*: Ps. cxix. 105.

Let us consider it, as to both.

1. In point of *Knowledge*, as it perfects the understanding; and so it will appear, in sundry particulars, how excellent a study it is.

For,

(1) The Scripture discovers unto us the knowledge of those truths, which the most improved natural reason could never sift out, and which are intelligible only by Divine Revelation.

God hath composed two books, by the diligent study of which, we may come to the knowledge of himself: the Book of the Creatures, and the Book of the Scriptures. The Book of the Creatures is written in those great letters of heaven and earth, the air and sea; and, by these, we may spell out somewhat of God: he made them for our instruction, as well as our service: there is not a creature, that God hath breathed abroad upon the face of the earth, but it reads us lectures, of his infinite power and wisdom; so that it is no absurdity to say, that, as they are all the words of his mouth, so they are all the works of his hands: the whole world is a speaking workmanship; Rom. i. 20. *The invisible things of God....are clearly seen....by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*: and, indeed, when we seriously consider how God hath poised the earth in the midst of the air, and the whole world in the midst of a vast and boundless nothing; how he hath hung out those glorious lights of heaven, the sun, the moon, and stars, and made paths in the sky for their several courses; how he hath laid the sea on heaps, and so girt it in, that it may possibly overlook, but not overflow the land; when we view the variety, harmony, and law of the creation; our reason must needs be very short, if we cannot from these collect the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator: so much of God as be-

longs to these two great attributes of Creator and Governor of the World, the Book of Nature may plainly discover to us. But, then, there are other more retired and reserved notions of God; other truths, that nearly concern ourselves and our eternal salvation to know and believe, which nature could never give the least glimpse to discover: what signature is there stamped upon any of the creatures of a Trinity in Unity, of the eternal generation or temporal carnation of the Son of God? what creature could inform us of our first Fall, and guilt contracted by it? where can we find the copy of the Covenants of Works or of Grace printed upon any of the creatures? though the great sages of the world were Nature's Secretaries, and ransacked its abstrusest mysteries, yet all their learning and knowledge could not discover the sacred mystery of a Crucified Saviour: these are truths, which nature is so far from searching out, that it can scarce receive them when revealed; 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God....neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*: the light, that can reveal these, must break immediately from heaven itself: and so it did, upon the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles; the penmen of the Holy Scriptures. And, if it were their singular privilege, that the Holy Ghost should descend into their breasts; and so possess them with divine inspirations, that what they spake or wrote became oracular: how little less is ours; since the Scriptures reveal to us the very same truths, which the Spirit revealed to them! God, heretofore, spake in them; and, now, he speaks by them unto us: their revelations are become ours: the only difference is, that what God taught them by extraordinary inspiration, the very same truths he teacheth us in the Scripture, by the ordinary illumination of his Spirit. Here, therefore, whilst we diligently converse in the Book of God, we enjoy the privilege of prophets: the same word of God, which came unto them, comes also unto us; and that, without those severe preparations and strong agonies, which sometimes they underwent, before God would inspire them with the knowledge of his heavenly truth.

That is the First Motive and Argument.

(2) The knowledge, which the Scripture teacheth, is, for the matter of it, the most sublime and lofty in the world.

All other sciences are but poor and beggarly elements, if compared with this. What doth the naturalist, but only busy himself in digging a little drossy knowledge, out of the entrails of

the earth? the astronomer, who ascends highest, mounts no higher than the celestial bodies, the stars and planets; which are but the outworks of heaven. But the Scripture pierceth much farther, and lets us into heaven itself: there, it discovers the majesty and glory of God upon his throne, the Eternal Son of God sitting at his right-hand making a prevailing and authoritative intercession for us, the glittering train of cherubims and seraphims, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: so that, indeed, when you have this book laid open before you, you have heaven itself and all the inconceivable glories of it laid open to your view. What can be more sublime, than the nature of God? and yet, here, we have it so plainly described by all its most glorious attributes and perfections, that the Scripture doth but beam forth light to an eye of faith, whereby it may be enabled to see him who is invisible. But, if we consider those gospel-mysteries which the Scripture relates; the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature, in Christ's incarnation; the mystical union of our persons to his, by our believing; that the Son of God should be substituted, in the stead of guilty sinners; that he, who knew no sin, should be made a sacrifice for sin, and the justice of God become reconciled to man, through the blood of God: these are mysteries so infinitely profound, as are enough to puzzle a whole college of angels. Now these the Scripture propounds unto us, not only to pose, but to perfect our understanding: for that little knowledge, unto which we can attain in these things, is far more excellent than the most comprehensive knowledge of all things else in the world: and, where our scanty apprehensions fall short of fathoming these deep mysteries, the Apostle hath taught us to seek it out with an Ω βάθος: Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

(3) The Scripture is an inexhaustible fountain of knowledge: the more you draw from it, the more still springs up. It is a deep mine, and the farther you search into it, still the richer you find it.

It is tedious to read the works and writings of men often over, because we are soon at the bottom of what they deliver, and our understanding hath nothing new to refresh it: but, in reading the Scripture, it fares with us as it did with those whom Christ

miraculously fed ; the bread multiplied under their teeth, and increased in the very chewing of it : so, here, while we ruminate and chew on the truths of the Scripture, they multiply and rise up thicker under our meditation. One great cause of the neglect, which many are guilty of in reading the Holy Scripture, is a fear that they shall but meet with the same things again, which they have already read and known ; and this they account tedious and irksome : indeed if they read it only superficially and slightly, it will be so ; but those, who fix their minds to ponder and meditate upon the word, find new truths arising up to their understanding, which they never before discovered. Look as it is in a starry night, if you cast your eyes upon many spaces of the heavens, at the first glance perhaps you shall discover no stars there ; yet, if you continue to look earnestly and fixedly, some will emerge to your view, that were before hid and concealed : so is it with the Holy Scriptures : if we only glance curiously upon them, no wonder we discover no more stars, no more glorious truths beaming out their light to our understanding. St. Augustin, found this so experimentally true, that he tells us, in his Third Epistle, that though he should, with better capacity and greater diligence, study all his lifetime, from the beginning of his childhood to decrepit age, nothing else but the Holy Scriptures ; yet they are so compacted and thick set with truths, that he might daily learn something, which before he knew not. God hath, as it were, studied to speak compendiously in the Scriptures : what a miracle of brevity is it, that the whole duty of man, relating both to God and his neighbour, should be all comprised in ten words ! not a word, but, were the sense of it drawn out, were enough to fill whole volumes ; and therefore the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 96. *I have seen an end of all perfection ; but thy commandments are exceeding broad.* When we have attained the knowledge of those things that are absolutely necessary to salvation, there yet remain such depths of wisdom, both in the manner of Scripture-expression, and in the mysteriousness of the things expressed, that, after our utmost industry, still there will be left new truths to become the discovery of a new search.

(4) The Scripture exhibits to us that knowledge, which is necessary to eternal salvation.

This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent : John xvii. 3. And this knowledge the Scriptures alone can afford us : John v. 39. So 2 Tim. iii. 15.

We need not, therefore, enquire after blind traditions, or expect any whimsical enthusiasms: the Written Word contains whatsoever is necessary to be known in order to eternal salvation; and whosoever is wise above what is written, is wise only in impertinencies. Now hath God contracted whatever was necessary for us to know, and summed it up in one book? and shall not we be diligent and industrious in studying that, which doth so necessarily concern us? Other knowledge is only for the adorning and embellishment of nature: this is for the necessity of life, of life eternal. I have before spoken enough concerning the necessity of knowledge unto salvation, and therefore shall not farther enlarge. Therefore, as St. Peter said to Christ, *Lord, whither shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*: so let us answer whatsoever may seem to call us off from the diligent study of the Scriptures, “Whither shall we go? to this we must cleave: with this we will converse; for here alone are the words of eternal life.”

(5) The knowledge, which the Scripture discloseth, is of undoubted certainty and perpetual truth: it depends not upon probabilities or conjectures, but the infallible authority of Christ himself: he hath dictated it, for whom it is impossible to lie.

The rule of our veracity or truth, is the conformity of our speech to the existence of things: but divine truth and veracity hath no other rule, besides the will of him that speaks it. He must needs speak infallible truth, who speaks things into their beings: such is the omnipotent speech of God. Whatsoever he declares is therefore true, because he declares it. Never matter how strange and impossible Scripture-mysteries may seem to flesh and blood; to the corrupt and captious understandings of natural men: when the Word of God hath undertaken for the truth, it is as much impiety to doubt of them, as it is folly to question the reality of what we see with our very eyes. Nay, the information of our senses, what we see, what we hear, what we feel, is not so certain, as the truth of those things, which God reveals and testifies in the Scriptures: and therefore the Apostle, 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. speaking of that miraculous voice that sounded from heaven: (Matt. xvii. 5. *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*;) saith *This voice..... we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*: but we have also a more sure word of prophecy; or, as the Greek may well be rendered, *We account more sure the word of prophecy*; unto

which *ye do well that ye take heed* : what ! a more sure word than a voice from heaven ! when God himself shall vocally bear witness to the truth ! yes, we have a more sure word, and that is the word of prophecy, recorded in the Old Testament. And, hence it will follow, that, because the prophecies concerning Christ may seem somewhat obscure, in comparison with this audible voice from heaven ; therefore the testimony of obscure Scripture, is to be preferred before the testimony of clear sense. Now, therefore, if you would know things beyond all danger, either of falsehood or hesitation, be conversant in the Scripture ; where we may take all for certain upon the word and authority of that God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

(6) The Scripture alone gives us the true and unerring knowledge of ourselves :

Man, who busies himself in knowing all things else, is of nothing more ignorant than of himself. The eye, which beholds other things, cannot see its own shape ; and, so, the soul of man, whereby he understands other objects, is usually ignorant of its own concernments. Now, as the eye, which cannot see itself directly, may see itself reflexively in a glass : so God hath given us his Scripture, which St. James compares to a glass, James i. 23. and holds this before the soul, wherein is represented our true state and idea.

There is a Fourfold state of man, that we could never have attained to know, but by the Scriptures.

His state of Integrity.

His state of Apostacy.

His state of Restitution.

His state of Glory.

The Scripture alone can reveal to us, what we were, in our Primitive constitution : naturally holy ; bearing the image and similitude of God, and enjoying his love ; free from all inward perturbations, or outward miseries ; having all the creatures subject to us, and, what is much more, ourselves.

What we were, in our state of Apostacy or Destitution ; despoiled of all our primitive excellencies ; dispossessed of all the happiness which we enjoyed, and of all hopes of any for the future ; liable, every moment, to the revenge of justice, and certain once to feel it.

What we are, in our state of Restitution, through grace ; begotten again to a lively hope ; adopted into the family of heaven ; redeemed by the blood of Christ ; sanctified and sealed by the

Boston
4 Fold
State

Holy Spirit; restored to the favour and friendship of God; recovering the initials of his image upon our souls here on earth, and expecting the perfection of it in heaven.

What we shall be, in our final state of Glory; clothed with light; crowned with stars; inebriated with pure spiritual joys. We shall see God as he is, know him as we are known by him, love him ardently, converse with him eternally; yea a state it will be, so infinitely happy, that it will leave us nothing to hope for.

This Fourfold state of man the Scripture doth evidently express.

Now these are such things, as it could never have entered into our hearts to have imagined, had not the Word of God described them to us; and, thereby, instructed us in the knowledge of ourselves, as well as of God and Christ.

Now let us put these Six particulars together. The Scripture instructs us in the knowledge of such things, as are intelligible only by Divine Revelation: it teacheth us the most sublime and lofty truths: it is a most inexhaustible fountain of knowledge; the more we draw, the more still springs up: it teaches that knowledge, which is necessary to salvation: it is of undoubted certainty and perpetual truth: and, lastly, it informs us in the knowledge of ourselves. And, certainly, if there be any thirst in you after knowledge, there needs no more be spoken to persuade you to the diligent study of the Scripture, which is a rich store and treasury of all wisdom and knowledge.

Thus we have seen how the Scriptures inform the Judgment.

2. Let us now briefly see how they reform the Life, and what *Practical Influence* they have upon the souls of men.

Here, the Word of God hath a mighty operation; and that, in sundry particulars.

(1) This is that Word, which convinceth and humbleth the stoutest and proudest sinners.

There are two sorts of secure sinners: those, who vaunt it in the confidence of their own righteousness; and those, who are secure through an insensibility of their own wickedness. Both these, the Word, when it is set home with power, convinces, humbles, and brings to the dust. It despoils the self-justiciary of all that false righteousness, which he once boasted of and trusted to: *I was alive without the Law once*, saith St. Paul: *but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*: Rom. vii. 9. It awakens and alarms the senseless, seared sinner:

how many have there been, who have scorned God and despised religion, whom yet one curse or threat of this Word hath made to tremble and fall down before the convincing majesty and authority of it!

(2) This is that Word, which sweetly comforts and raises them, after their dejections.

All other applications to a wounded spirit are improper and impertinent. It is only Scripture-consolation that can ease it. The leaves of this book are like the leaves of that tree, Rev. xxii. 2. which were *for the healing of the nations*. The same weapon, that wounds, must here work the cure.

(3) This is that Word, which works the mighty change upon the heart, in renovation.

Take a man, who runs on in vile and desperate courses, who sells himself to do iniquity and commits all manner of wickedness with greediness; and make use of all the arguments that reason can suggest: these seldom reclaim any from their debaucheries: or if, in some few, they do reform the life; yet they can never change the heart. But that, which no other means can effect, the Word of God can: Ps. xix. 7, *The Law of God is perfect, converting the soul*.

(4) This is that Word, which strengthens and arms the people of God, to endure the greatest temporal evils, only in hope of that future reward which it promiseth.

(5) This is that Word, which contains in it such a collection of rules and duties, that whosoever observes and obeys, shall in the end infallibly obtain everlasting life.

Though I can but just mention these heads unto you, yet there is enough in them to persuade you to be diligent in the Scriptures. *In them*, saith our Saviour, *ye think to have eternal life*.

We are all of us guilty malefactors; but God hath been pleased to afford us the mercy of this book: and, what! shall we not so much as read for our lives?

This is that book, according to which we must either stand or fall, be acquitted or condemned eternally. The unalterable sentence of the Last Day will pass upon us, as it is here recorded in this Scripture. Here we may, beforehand, know our doom; and what will become of us to all eternity. *He, that believeth..... shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned*. It is said, Rev. xx. 12. that when the dead stood before God to be judged, *the books were opened*: that is, the Book of Conscience, and the Book of the Scripture. Be persuaded to open this book,

and to judge yourselves out of it before the Last Day. It is not a sealed book to you: you may there read what your present state is, and foretel what your future will be. If it be a state of sin and wrath, search farther: there are directions how you may change this wretched state for a better. If it be a state of grace and favour, there are rules how to preserve you in it. It is a word suited to all persons, all occasions, all exigencies: it informs the ignorant, strengthens the weak, comforts the disconsolate, supports the afflicted, relieves the tempted, resolves the doubtful, directs all to those ways which lead to endless happiness; where, as the word of God hath dwelt richly in us, so we shall dwell for ever gloriously with God.

Read at Gosport
Nov. 15th 1818

A

DISCOURSE UPON PROVIDENCE.

MAT. x. 29, 30.

ARE NOT TWO SPARROWS SOLD FOR A FARTHING? AND ONE OF THEM SHALL NOT FALL ON THE GROUND WITHOUT YOUR FATHER.

BUT THE VERY HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD ARE ALL NUMBERED,

THE mystery of God's Providence, next to that of Man's Redemption, is the most sublime and inscrutable. It is easy, in both, to run ourselves off our reason: for, as reason confesseth itself at a loss, when it attempts a search into those Eternal Decrees, of electing sinners to salvation, and designing Christ to save them; so must it, likewise, when it attempts to trace out all those entangled mazes and labyrinths, wherein the Divine Providence walks. We may sooner tire reason, in such a pursuit, than satisfy it; unless it be some kind of satisfaction, when we have driven it to a nonplus, to relieve ourselves with an *Ὠ βάθος*: *O the depth of the....wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

This knowledge, therefore, being too wonderful for us, I shall not presume to conduct you into that secret place, that pavilion of clouds and surrounding darkness, where God sits holding the rudder of the world, and steering it through all the floatings of casualty and contingency to his own fore-ordained ends: where he grasps and turns the great engine of nature in his hands; fastening one pin, and loosing another; moving and removing the several wheels of it; and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. Let it content us, to consider so much of God's Providence as may affect us with comfort, in reflecting on that particular care which he takes of us; rather than with wonder and astonishment, by

too bold a prying into those hidden methods, whereby he exerciseth it.

Our Saviour Christ, in this chapter, giving commission to his Apostles and sending them forth to preach the Gospel, obviates an objection which they might make, concerning the great danger that would certainly attend such an undertaking. To send them upon such a hated employment, would be no other than to thrust them upon the rage and malice of the world; to send them forth as sheep into the midst of wolves, who would doubtless worry and devour them: "Sure we are to have our message derided; our persons injured; and that holy name of thine, on which we summon them to believe, blasphemed and reviled: and, though our word may prove a word of life to some few of the hearers, yet to us, who are the preachers of it, it will prove no other than death." A vile and wretched world, the while! when the Gospel of Peace and Reconciliation shall thus stir up enmity and persecution against the ambassadors, who are appointed to proclaim it!

To this our Saviour answers,

First. By shewing what the extent of their adversaries' power is; how far it can reach, and what mischief it can do, when God permits it to rage to the very utmost.

And this he doth, in the 28th verse; the verse immediately foregoing the text: *Fear not them, which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*: or, as St. Luke expresseth it, chap. xii. 4. *They can kill the body, but after that, have no more that they can do.* Alas! are such men to be feared, who, when they do their worst, can only destroy your worst part; which if they do not, yet accidents or diseases will? What! are your bodies but clogs to your spirit, and prisons to your souls? and, certainly, those enemies are not very formidable, who, when they most think to hurt you, only knock off your clog, or break open your prison and let your souls escape to their desired liberty.

Secondly. Our Saviour answers, that though they can kill the body, when God permits them; yet they cannot so much as touch it, without his permission.

And this he doth, in the words of my text, by shewing how punctual and particular God's Providence is; even over the smallest, and those which seem the most trifling occurrences of the world. A sparrow, whose price is but mean, two of them valued at a farthing, which some make to be the tenth part of a

Roman penny, and was certainly one of their least coins; whose life, therefore, is but contemptible, and whose flight seems but giddy and at random: yet it falls not to the ground, neither lights any where, *without your Father*: his All-wise Providence hath before appointed, what bough it shall pitch on, what grains it shall pick up, where it shall lodge, and where it shall build, on what it shall live, and when it shall die. And, if your Father's Providence be so critical about the small concerns even of sparrows: *fear not ye, for ye are of more value than many sparrows*; yea, of more value than many men.

Our Saviour adds: *The very hairs of your head are all numbered*. God keeps an account even of that stringy excrement. He knows how many fall off, and the precise number of those that remain; and no wonder, since he knows the number of our sins, which are far more.

Hence we learn, that God governs the meanest, the most inconsiderable and contemptible occurrences in the world, by an exact and particular Providence. Do you see a thousand little motes and atoms, wandering up and down in a sunbeam? it is God, that so peoples it; and he guides their innumerable and irregular strayings. Not a dust flies in a beaten road, but God raises it, conducts its uncertain motion, and by his particular care conveys it to the certain place which he had before appointed for it, nor shall the most fierce and tempestuous wind hurry it any farther. And, if God's care and providence reach thus to these minute things, which are but as it were the circumstances of nature, and little accessories to the world; certainly, man, who is the head and lord of it, for whose sake and service other creatures were formed, may very well be confident that God exerciseth an especial and most accurate providence over him and his affairs.

By this you see what the subject is, of which it is intended to treat; even the over-ruling and all-disposing Providence of God: not a sparrow, not a hair of your heads falls to the ground, *without your Father*.

But, before I proceed farther, I must take notice of Two things in the words.

First. That our Saviour, speaking here of the Providence of God, ascribes to him the name of our Father.

God hath many names and titles attributed unto him in the Scriptures; as Father, Lord, Creator, Redeemer, Judge, King,

and God: but God is a word that denotes his essence: Lord, is a title of his dominion: Creator, marks out his omnipotence: Redeemer, commends his love: Judge, is a name of fear and astonishment: and King, is a title of royal majesty: but this endearing name of Father signifies unto us his Providence; for, from him, as from a Father, do we expect and receive guidance and government.

Secondly. Whereas nothing comes to pass without our Heavenly Father, this may be understood Three Ways; without his permission, without his ordination and concurrence, without his overruling and directing it to his own ends.

No Evil comes to pass, without his Permissive Providence.

No good comes to pass, without his Ordaining and Concurring Providence.

Nothing, whether good or evil, comes to pass, without the Overruling Providence of our Father, guiding and directing it to his own ends.

But, concerning this distinction of permissive, concurring, and overruling Providence, I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter.

My work, at present, shall be,

To describe unto you What the Providence of God is, in the general notion thereof.

To prove that all affairs and occurrences, in the world, are guided and governed by Divine Providence.

To answer some puzzling questions and doubts, concerning the Providence of God; and some objections, which may be made against it.

I. Let us see WHAT PROVIDENCE IS.

Take it in this description: Providence is an act of God, whereby, according to his eternal and most wise counsel, he preserves and governs all things; and directs them all to their ends, but chiefly to his own glory.

This Providence consisteth in Two things; Preservation and Government of his creatures.

i. One remarkable act of the Providence of God, is the PRESERVATION of his creatures in their beings.

He preserves them,

1. *In their species and kind, by the constant succession of them*

one after another: so that, though the individuals of them are mortal and perish; yet the species or kind is immortal.

There is no kind of creature that was at first made by God, but it still continueth to this very day, and shall do so to the end of the world. And, truly, it is the wonderful Providence of God, thus to perpetuate the creation: that, whereas we see an inbred enmity in some sorts of creatures against others; yet his wisdom so sways their mutual antipathies, that none of them shall ever prevail to a total extirpation and destruction of the other.

2. He preserves them, likewise, by his Providence, *in their individual and particular beings*, while they have a room to fill up and an office to discharge in the universe.

Each fly and worm, as well as man (who is but the greater worm of the two) hath a work to do in the world; and, till that be finished, God sustains its being: nor shall the weakest creature be destroyed, within the prefixed time that God hath set to its duration. There are none of us here alive this day, but have abundant cause thankfully to acknowledge the powerful and merciful Providence of God, in preserving us in and rescuing us from many dangers and deaths, to which we stood exposed. It is only his visitation, that hath hitherto preserved our spirits; and, to his never-failing Providence we owe it, that such frail and feeble creatures, who are liable to be crushed before the moth, liable to so many diseases and accidents, have yet a name among the living, and have not yet failed from off the face of the earth.

ii. As God preserves, so he GOVERNS all things, by his Providence.

And this government consists in Two things: Direction of the creatures' actions; and Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, according to the actions of his rational creatures.

1. God, by his Governing Providence, *directs all the actions of his creatures*; yea, and by the secret, but efficacious illapse and penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleaseth.

And, from this part of his providence, brancheth forth his permission of evil actions, and his concurrence to good; both by the assistance of his common, and likewise of his special grace: and, lastly, his general influence into all the actions of

our lives, all which we are enabled to perform by the almighty power of the Divine Providence; which, as at first it bestowed upon us natural faculties, so by a constant concurrence it doth excite and assist those faculties to their respective operations.

2. God, by his Governing Providence, *distributes rewards and punishments according to our actions.*

And this part of his providence is oftentimes remarkable, even in this present life; when we see retributions of divine mercy and vengeance, signally proportioned according to men's demerits: but the more especial manifestation and execution of it is commonly adjourned to the life to come; and, then, all the seeming inequalities of God's dispensations here will be fully adjusted, in the eternal recompence of the godly, and the eternal punishment of the wicked and impenitent.

Now, by this Almighty Providence, God overrules and sways all things to his own glory. There is nothing comes to pass, but God hath his ends in it, and will certainly make his own ends out of it. Though the world seem to run at random, and affairs to be huddled together in blind confusion and rude disorder: yet God sees and knows the concatenation of all causes and effects; and so governs them, that he makes a perfect harmony out of all those seeming jarrings and discords. As you may observe in the wheels of a watch, though they all move with contrary motions one to the other, yet they are useful and necessary to make it go right: so is it, in these inferior things: the proceedings of Divine Providence are all regular and orderly to his own ends, in all the thwartings and contrarieties of second causes. We have this expressed in that mysterious vision, Ezek. i. 10. where the providences of God are set forth by the emblem of a wheel within a wheel, one intersecting and crossing another; yet they are described to be full of eyes round about: what is this, but to denote unto us, that, though providences are as turning and unstable as wheels, though they are as thwart and cross as one wheel within another, yet these wheels are all nailed round with eyes: God sees and chooses his way in the most intricate and entangled providences that are; and so governs all things, that whilst each pursues its own inclination, they are all overruled to promote his glory.

This is Providence: the two great parts of which, are Preservation and Government; and the great end of both these,

the glory of the Almighty and All-wise God. And this is it, which our Saviour speaks of when he tells the Jews, John v. 17. *My Father worketh hitherto*, viz. in preserving and governing his creatures; *and I work*.

II. The Second General propounded, was to demonstrate to you, that **ALL THINGS IN THE WORLD ARE GOVERNED BY THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE**.

The Old Philosophers, among the Heathens, had very different notions concerning the government of the world. Some held, that all things were governed by an imperious and inevitable fate, to which God himself was subject: so, Chrysippus, and the Stoics. Others thought, that all was left to blind chance; and whatsoever came to pass here below was only casual and fortuitous: so, the Epicureans. Others, that the Great God regarded only the more glorious affairs of heaven; but had committed the care of earthly concernments unto inferior spirits, as his under officers and deputies: so, most of the Platonists, though their master was orthodox. Others, that God's Providence reached only to the great and important matters of this world; but that it was too much a disparagement to his Infinite Majesty, to look after the motion of every straw and feather, and to take care of every trivial and inconsiderable occurrence in this world: so speaks Cicero, in his Book *de Naturâ Deorum*: *Magna Dii curant, parva negligunt*. Vide Arriani Epictet. lib. i. cap. 12. How much better is that most excellent saying of St. Austin! *Tu sic curas unumquemque nostrum, tanquam solum cures; et sic omnes, tanquam singulos*: "God takes as much care of every particular, as if each were all; and as much care of all, as if all were but one particular."

To demonstrate this all-disposing Providence of God, I shall take Two ways.

From the consideration of the Nature and Perfection of the Deity.

From the contemplation of that Beauty and Order, which we may observe in the world.

It is most necessary, that we should have our hearts well established in the firm and unwavering belief of this truth, that, whatsoever comes to pass, be it good or evil, we may look up to the disposer of all, to God: and, if it be good, may acknowledge it with praise; if evil, bear it with patience: since he

dispenseth both the one and the other; the good to reward us, and the evil to try us.

Now,

i. To demonstrate it FROM THE BEING AND NATURE OF GOD.

This I shall do, in these following propositions, which I shall lay down as so many steps and gradations.

1. That *there is a God*, is undoubtedly clear by the light of nature.

Never was there any people so barbarous and stupid, but did firmly assent to this truth, without any other proof than the deep impress upon their hearts, and the observation of visible objects, that there was a Deity. It is neither a problem of reason, nor yet strictly an article of faith; but the unforced dictate of every man's natural conscience; where conscience is not violently perverted, and under the force of those vices, whose interest it is that there should be no God. Never was there any nation, which worshipped none; but their great sottishness was, that they worshipped many.

2. As all confess that there is a God; so, likewise, that *this God must necessarily have in himself all perfections*, as being the first principle and source of all things.

All these perfections of wisdom, power, knowledge, or the like, which we see scattered up and down among the creatures, must all be centered in God: and that, in a far more eminent degree; because whatever is found in creatures is but derived and borrowed from him, and therefore it must needs follow, that, because it is of more perfection to be infinite in each perfection, therefore God is infinite in them all.

3. Among all the perfections, which are dispersed among the creatures, the most excellent is *knowledge and understanding*.

For this is a property, that agrees only to angels and men, who are the top and flower of the creation: and therefore, certainly, this perfection of the creatures is to be found in God; yea, and that infinitely. His knowledge and wisdom, therefore, are infinite.

4. His knowledge being thus infinite, *he both knows himself, and all other things in himself*.

(1) God perfectly knows himself: he knows the boundless extent of his own being; and, though he be infinite and in-

comprehensible to all others, yet is he finite and comprehended to himself: and, hence, it follows,

(2) That he knows particularly all other things. For, if he know himself perfectly, he must needs know all things besides himself; because none can perfectly know himself, that doth not fully know all that his power and strength can reach unto. But there is nothing, which the power of God cannot reach; for, by his power, he created all things. And, therefore, knowing his own essence, which is the cause of all, he knows every thing in the fecundity of his essence.

Thus we have demonstrated it, from the principles of reason, that God necessarily knows all things. But Providence denotes more than knowledge: and, therefore,

5. This knowledge, which is in God, is not like that, which we acquire: it is not a knowledge, that depends upon the objects known, and forms ideas from the contemplation of things already existing: but it is *like the knowledge of an artificer, which causeth and produceth the things it comprehends.*

God knows them, before they are; and, by knowing them, brings them to pass. "God knows all things," saith St. Austin, de Trinitat. 15. "not because they are; but, therefore they are, because God knew them." So that his eternal knowledge and understanding give being to every thing in the world.

6. *It appertains to him, who gives being to a thing, to preserve and govern it in its being.*

And, therefore, God giving being to all things, he also doth maintain and provide for them. It is the very law of nature, which he hath imprinted upon all his creatures, to provide for their own offspring: we see with what solicitous affection and tenderness, even brute and irrational creatures do it: we are all the offspring of God, and he our common parent; and therefore, certainly, he, who hath inspired such parental care in all things else, doth himself much more take care to give education to all to which he hath given being.

Thus, you see, it is proved that God's providence reacheth unto all things.

It might likewise be demonstrated from God's omnipresence. He is present every where, with and in all his creatures: and, certainly, he is not with them, as an idle and unconcerned spectator; but as the director and governor of their actions.

ii. But I shall proceed to the Second sort of arguments, to prove the Divine Providence.

And those are taken FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE FRAME AND COMPAGES OF THE WORLD; THE BEAUTY AND HARMONY, WHICH WE SEE IN NATURE.

The world is a book, wherein we may clearly read the wonderful wisdom of God. There is no creature, which doth not proclaim aloud, that God is the wise Creator and Governor of it.

Who hath gilded the globe of the sun, and put on his rays? Who hath set its bounds, and measured out its race, that it should, without failing, without error or mistake, know how to make its daily and annual returns, and divide out times and seasons to the world? Who hath given a particular motion to all the voluminous orbs of heaven, and beat out a path for every star to walk in? Who hath swathed in the great and proud ocean, with a girdle of sand; and restrains the waves thereof, that though they be higher than the land, yet they shall not overflow it? Who poise the oppositions and contrarieties which are in nature, in so even a balance, that none of them shall ever prevail to a total destruction of the other? Who brings up the great family of brute beasts, without tumult and disorder? Do not all these great and wonderful works speak forth the watchful Providence of God; who, as he makes them by his word, so still governs them by his power?

Therefore, whatsoever we receive beneficial from them, whatsoever seems to provide for our necessities or conveniencies; it is God, who hath so dispensed the government of the world, as to make it serviceable. If the heavens turn and move for us, if the stars as so many burning torches light us in the obscurity of the night, if the angels protect and defend us, let us acknowledge all this from the Providence of God only. It is he, who turns the heavens round their axis: he lights up the stars: he commands the angels to be ministering spirits, guards, and centinels about us. If the fire warm us, the air refresh us, the earth support us, it is God, who hath kindled the fire, who hath spread forth the air, and stablished the earth upon the pillars of his own decree, that it should not be shaken. And let us know, too, that, when we want these creatures for our sustentation, if the heavens, if the angels, if the earth, if the sea, if all things should fail us, yea band and set themselves against

us; yet God, who provides for us by them, can also, if he please, provide for us without them.

Thus we have dispatched the Two General Enquiries; and have described and demonstrated unto you the Divine Providence.

III. The Third, which remains, is to ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS which may be made, and have indeed been strongly urged, against the government of the world by Providence.

As,

i. "If the world be governed by Providence, WHENCE COMES IT, THAT WICKED AND UNGODLY MEN FLOURISH AND PROSPER? that God shines upon their tabernacles, and drops fatness upon all their paths: whereas, on the contrary, the godly are often exposed to poverty, contempt, and reproaches; persecuted by men, and afflicted by God? Would it not be as agreeable to the divine goodness, to cast abroad the wealth, the pomp, and glory of this world with an undeciding hand; leaving men to scramble for them as they can: as that he should, with a particular and studied care, advance those who contemn him, and crush those who humbly trust and depend upon him? Can I think the world is governed by the providence of a just God, when usually unjust men govern the world under him? when swaggering sinners, who despise him, have power likewise to control others? Is it wisdom, to put a sword into that hand, which will turn the point of it against the giver? or justice, to impower them to all those acts of rapine, violence, and oppression, which they commit? and shall we call that Providence, which is neither wise nor just? One hath an unexhausted store to supply his dissolute luxury and riot; another, scarce necessities to maintain a poor life spent in the commands of God: here, a wicked Dives, who worshipped no other god but his own belly, feasts deliciously every day; whilst a godly Lazarus starves at this glutton's gate, and entertains the dogs with licking his sores: and, what! doth God's particular care furnish the glutton's table with daily excess, who will not give the remaining scraps to God's children? if there be Divine Providence in this,

what is become of the Divine Equity? This inequality of affairs seems to persuade, that it is not the Holy and Righteous God of Heaven, but rather the God of this World, who governs the concerns of it; and that he spoke truth, when he told our Saviour, Luke iv. 6. The power and glory of this world is *delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it.*"

Now to answer this,

1. *This quarrel is not only, of late, commenced against heaven; but it hath been the complaint of all ages.*

It raised controversies among the very Heathens themselves; some of them upon this ground denying, and others again by whole treatises defending, the government of the world by Providence. And no wonder it should puzzle them, since the very best of God's saints and servants have likewise stumbled at this stone of offence: thus, the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3. *As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked:* so, likewise, the Prophet Jeremiah, xii. 1. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously?* This, therefore, is an old grief; which, in all ages of the world, hath been complained of. And, though at first sight it seems to confute the Providence of God, yet, if we more narrowly consider it, it is a strong confirmation of it: for, since virtue and goodness are so despicable a thing in the world, since holy and good men have been always injured and persecuted, certainly were there not an All-wise Providence, that finds out ways and means of its own to counterpoise these disadvantages, and to preserve them amidst the rage and hatred of their implacable enemies, long ere this there had been none of them left, either to have suffered or complained. Were there no other argument to prove that God governs the world, this would suffice, even, That his servants have been continually oppressed in it, yet never could be rooted out of it: though men and devils have combined together against them, and God (as they have complained) hath seemed to abandon them; yet such a fenceless and forlorn generation as this, hath been hitherto and shall still be preserved to the very end of the world: doth not this speak forth the power and care of Almighty God, thus to keep a bush unconsumed,

in the midst of fire? to preserve fuel untouched, in the very embraces of flames?

2. *God doth chastise his own people and prosper the wicked, that he might thereby rectify our judgments; and teach us not to account adversity the greatest evil, nor yet prosperity the chief good.*

For, certainly, were they so, only the righteous should enjoy the grandeur, pomp, and glory of this world; and only the wicked and ungodly become miserable. Concerning this, St. Austin speaks excellently, in his LXXth Epistle: "Worldly things," saith he, "are, in themselves, but indifferent; and good and evil, only as they are improved: but, lest they should be thought always evil, therefore God sometimes gives them to those who are good; and, lest they should be thought the highest and the chief good, they are sometimes given to those who are evil." And a like saying to this hath Seneca, in his Book de Provident. cap. 5. There is no such way, to traduce the riches, the honours, the pleasures of this life; those vain nothings, which are so earnestly desired and eagerly pursued by the most; no such way to beat down their price in the esteem of all wise and good men, as for God to bestow those upon the vilest, which he sometimes denies to the best and holiest.

3. *When God bestows any temporal good thing upon wicked and ungodly men, he gives it as their portion: and, when he brings any calamity on his own children, he inflicts it for their trial.*

Is it not ordinary, that a servant receives more for wages, than a son may have for the present at his own command? God is the Father and bountiful Maintainer of the whole Family, both in heaven and earth; a Father to the Faithful, a Lord and Master over all: he may give his slaves large wages, when his own children possibly have not so much in hand. Is he therefore hard or unjust? no: the inheritance is theirs, and that is kept in reversion for them. What wicked men possess of this world, is all that ever they can hope for: why should we grudge them filled bags, or swelling titles! it is their whole portion: they now receive their good things: hast thou food and clothing? that is children's fare: envy not ungodly men, who flaunt it in the gallantry of the world: they have more than you; but it is all they are like to have: the Psalmist gives us an account of their estate, Ps. xvii. 14. They are the *men of this world*, who *have their portion in this life*, and whose bellies God filleth with his *hid treasure*. Whereas thou, O Christian, who possessest

nothing, art heir-apparent of heaven, coheir with Jesus Christ who is the heir of all things, and hast an infinite mass of riches laid up for thee; so great and infinite, that all the stars of heaven are too few to account it by: you have no reason to complain of being kept short; for all, that God hath, is yours: whether prosperity or adversity, life or death, all is yours. What God gives, is for your comfort: what he denies or takes away, is for your trial: it is for the increase of those graces, which are far more gracious than any temporal enjoyment. If, by seeing wicked and ungodly men flow in wealth and ease, when thou art forced to struggle against the inconveniencies and difficulties of a poor estate, thou hast learnt a holy contempt and disdain of the world, believe it, God hath herein given thee more, than if he had given thee the world itself.

4. *God doth, many times, even in this world, expound the mystery of his Providence, by the fatal and dreadful overthrow of those wicked men, whom he, for a while, suffered to prosper.*

The triumph of the wicked, saith Job, xx. 5. is short. At longest, it is but short; because measured out by a short life: now, is their triumph; hereafter, their torment. But, many times, God brings them to ruin, even in this life: he turns the wheel of Providence, and makes it pass over those, who, but a while before, set vaunting a-top of it. And then wilt thou doubt, whether God governs the world by Providence? wilt thou doubt, whether God be just, in suffering wicked men to prosper and flourish? God lifts them up on high, only that he may cast them down with the more terrible fall. When all the workers of iniquity prosper, saith the Psalmist Ps. xcii. 7. it is that they might be destroyed for ever. Now when God comes thus to execute judgment upon them, those, who questioned the Providence of God in their advancement, will the more glorify it in their downfall: The righteous shall see it and be glad; and shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily there is a God, that judgeth in the earth: Ps. lviii. 11.

5. *If God doth not clear up this inequality of his Providence, in this life; yet he will certainly do it, at the Day of Judgment.*

And, indeed, the strange dispensation of affairs in this world is an argument, which doth convincingly prove, that there shall be such a day, wherein all the *involutra* and entanglements of Providence shall be clearly unfolded. Then, shall the riddle be dissolved, why God hath given this and that profane wretch so

much wealth, and so much power to do mischief: is it not, *that they might be destroyed for ever?* Then, shall they be called to a strict account, for all that plenty and prosperity, for which they are now envied; and the more they have abused, the more dreadful will their condemnation be. Then, it will appear that God gave them not as mercies, but as snares. It is said, Ps. xi. 6. that God will *rain on the wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*: when he scatters abroad the desirable things of this world, riches, honours, pleasures, &c. then he rains *snares* upon them; and, when he shall call them to an account for these things, then he will rain upon them *fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest* of his wrath and fury. Dives, who caroused, on earth; yet, in hell, could not obtain so much as one poor drop of water, to cool his scorched and flaming tongue: had not his excess and intemperance been so great in his life, his fiery thirst had not been so tormenting after death: and, therefore, in that sad item that Abraham gives him, Luke xvi. 25. he bids him *remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*: I look upon this as a most bitter and a most deserved sarcasm; upbraiding him for his gross folly, in making the trifles of this life his good things: Thou hast received thy good things, but now thou art tormented. Oh, never call Dives's purple and delicious fare *good things*, if they thus end in torments! was it good for him, to be wrapt in purple, who is now wrapt in flames? was it good for him, to fare deliciously, who was only thereby fatted up against the day of slaughter? Could you lay your ears to hell-gates, you might hear many of the grandees and potentates, the great and rich ones of this world, cursing all their pomp and bravery; and wishing that they had been the most despicable of all those, whom they once hated, oppressed, and injured. And, as it will appear at that day, that none of the enjoyments of this world are good to wicked men; so will it appear, that none of those afflictions and calamities, which good men suffer, are evil: Lazarus's sores are not evil, since now every sore is turned into a star: his lying prostrate at the rich miser's door is not evil, since now he lies in Abraham's bosom. And, at this day, all these intricacies of Providence will be made plain; and we shall have other apprehensions of things, than what we have at present: now we call prosperity, riches, and abundance, *good*

things; and want and affliction, *evil*; but, when we come to consider these with relation to eternity, the true standard to measure them by, then poverty may be a mercy, and riches a judgment: God may bless one by afflictions, and curse another by prosperity: he may bestow more upon us in suffering us to want, than if he should give us the store and treasures of all the earth. And, certainly, whatever our thoughts of it are now, yet within awhile this will be the judgment of us all: when we are once lodged in our eternal state, then we shall acknowledge that nothing in this world deserved the name of good, but as it promoted our eternal happiness; nor of evil, but as it tended to eternal misery.

And thus you see this grand objection answered; and the Providence of God cleared from that injustice, which we are apt peevishly to impute unto it.

Other doubts are of less moment, and therefore shall be more briefly resolved.

As,

ii. "IF GOD'S PROVIDENCE ORDAINS ALL THINGS TO COME TO PASS ACCORDING TO THE IMMUTABLE LAW OF HIS PURPOSE, THEN WHAT NECESSITY IS THERE OF PRAYER? We cannot, by our most fervent prayers, alter the least circumstance or punctilio in God's decrees. If he hath so laid the method of his Providence in his own counsels, as to prepare mercies and blessings for us, our prayers cannot hasten nor maturate them before their time: or, if he determine, by his Providence, to bring afflictions upon us, our prayers cannot prevent nor adjourn them beyond their prefixed time."

Now to this Aquinas 2. 29. 83. Art. 2. answers well, that the Divine Providence doth not only ordain what effects shall come to pass, but also by what means and causes, and in what order they shall flow. God hath appointed, as the effect itself, so the means to accomplish it.

Now prayer is a means to bring to pass that, which God hath determined shall be. We do not pray, out of hope to alter God's eternal purposes; but we pray, to obtain that, which God hath ordained to be obtained by our prayers: we ask, that thereby we may be fit to receive, what God hath from all eternity determined to give by prayer, and not otherwise. And,

therefore, when we lie under any affliction, if we languish under pain or sickness, if we are pinched by want or poverty, if we are oppressed by the injuries and persecutions of others, prayer is necessary; because, as God by his Providence hath brought these things upon us, so likewise possibly the same Providence hath determined not to remove them, till we earnestly and fervently pray for our deliverance from them. And, therefore, when God hath promised great mercies to the Jews, he tells them by the Prophet Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* Prayer, therefore, doth not incline God to bestow that, which before he was not resolved to give; but it capacitates us to receive that, which God will not give otherwise.

iii. Another objection may be this: "IF PROVIDENCE ORDERETH AND DISPOSETH ALL THE OCCURRENCES OF THE WORLD, THEN THERE CAN NOTHING FALL OUT CASUALLY AND CONTINGENTLY."

I answer: In respect of God it is true, there is nothing casual nor contingent in the world. A thing may be casual, in respect of particular causes; but, in respect of the universal and first cause, nothing is such. If a master should send a servant to a certain place, and command him to stay there till such a time, and presently after should send another servant to the same, the meeting of these two is wholly casual in respect of themselves, but ordained and foreseen by the master that sent them. So is it, in all fortuitous events here below. They fall out unexpectedly, as to us; but not so, as to God: he foresees and he appoints all the vicissitudes of things, and all the surprises of human accidents. So that, you see, there may be contingencies in the world, though God's Providence be most particular and punctual.

iv. Some may object, that this "WOULD DESTROY THE LIBERTY OF MAN'S WILL; AND SUBJECT ALL THINGS TO A FATAL NECESSITY, EVEN HUMAN ACTIONS THEMSELVES: for, if man can do nothing, but what God hath by his Providence fore-appointed shall be done, how then is man free, either to do or not to do?"

This question requires much more time to answer it, at large, than I can allow it.

Some, seeing it a very difficult thing to reconcile Providence and Liberty, have presumed to deny that Providence inter,

meddles at all in such affairs as depend upon the free-will of man. And, of this opinion, Tully seems to have been: for which St. Austin chastiseth him as injurious to God; when he saith, *Voluntatem dum faceret liberam, fecit sacrilegam.*

I shall not here stand to distinguish, of a necessity of co-action, and a necessity of infallibility; and that the Providence of God doth not bring upon the will a necessity of coercion, but only of infallibility, which very well consists with the liberty of the will.

All, that I shall at present answer, is, That God doth indeed efficaciously determine the will to do what it doth: yet this determination leaves it in a perfect state of liberty; because the liberty of the will doth not so much consist in indifferency to act or not to act, as in a rational spontaneity. When we do what we have an appetite to do upon grounds that to us seem rational, then we act freely. Now, though God doth absolutely sway the will which way he pleaseth, yet he never forceth it contrary to its own inclinations: for that, to which God determines it by his Providence, seems, at that present, most rational to be done; and, upon that representation of good in the object, the will embraces it, and acts accordingly. So that its freedom is not violated by any boisterous and compulsive sway, which the First Cause hath over it; but God attracts it with such a powerful and insinuating sweetness, that, though the will can incline to nothing but what it seems to have reason for, yet withal it wills nothing but what God by Providence overrules it unto. So Austin, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. v. cap. 9. *Nos dicimus et Deum scire omnia antequam fiant, et voluntate nos facere quicquid à nobis non nisi volentibus fieri sentimus et novimus:* “Though God foresees and decrees all things before they are, yet we do that with a free will, which we do not otherwise than willingly.”

v. The last doubt and query is this: “IF GOD GOVERN ALL ACTIONS AND ALL AFFAIRS, BY AN EXACT AND CRITICAL PROVIDENCE; HOW THEN COMES IT TO PASS, THAT THERE IS SO MUCH EVIL, VILLAINY, AND WICKEDNESS COMMITTED IN IT?”

The disquisition of this is the more obscure and intricate, because it is hard to conceive how God, who is Infinite Goodness itself, should interest his Providence in what is so contrary to his nature.

Now, here, we must affirm, that there is no evil whatsoever, whether it be of sin or of suffering, that comes to pass without

the Providence of God. As for the evil of Punishment or Suffering, it is clear, Amos iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?* But, for the evil of Sin, it is not effectively from God; yet doth he, by his Providence, for most holy and wise ends, permit wicked men to commit those sins, which his law prohibits, and his nature abhors. Though they refuse to be subject to the written law, yet they are and must be subject to the eternal law of his own counsels: and there is not a sin which they commit, but, as his authority condemns and his purity hates it; so, his wisdom both suffers it to be, and overrules it when it is to his own ends. It is true, all men naturally are slaves to their lusts, but God holds their chain in his own hands: sometimes, slackening it, by his permission; and, sometimes, straitening it, by his powerful restraint. And, therefore, to plead Providence the warrant of our actions (a boisterous argument, which, of late, hath been most used amongst us, until Providence itself had signally confuted it) is to plead that for the justification of our actions, without which they could not be sinful: thus Cain killed his brother, by a Providence; and Achan stole the wedge of gold, and Judas betrayed Christ, and the Jews crucified him, by a Providence; yea, and all the villainy, that was ever acted under the sun, was all brought forth out of the cursed womb of men's lusts, by the Providence of God, that is, by his permission to the evil, and concurrence as to the act. Neither is this any stain at all to the infinite holiness and purity of his nature: for, though we sin, if we hinder not the commission of sin in others when it is in our power to do it, because we are commanded and obliged to it, both by the care we ought to have of his honour and the charity we owe unto the souls of others; yet no such obligation lies upon God, who may justly give men over to their perverted inclinations: and, though he can easily keep the most wicked man in the world, from rushing into those sins which he daily commits; yet, not being bound to interpose his power to hinder them, he permits them holily, and at last will punish them justly.

But, the question is not so much whether God doth not by his providence permit sin, as why he doth it. And St. Austin answers it excellently, in that known saying of his: "God," saith he, "who is infinitely good, would never permit evil, were he not also infinitely wise, and knew how to bring good out of evil." It is the primary object of his hatred; and that

alone, for which he hates wicked men. As he is a holy God, so he hates it; and, as he is a wise God, so he permits it.

And there is a Twofold good, for which God doth sometimes permit evil.

The Manifestation of his own Glory.

The Exercise of his People's Graces.

1. God, by permitting sin, *manifests the glory of many of his attributes.*

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; saith the Psalmist, Ps. lxxvi. 10. Every sin strikes at some of the Divine Attributes: one denies his justice; another, his mercy: one, his power; another, his wisdom: and all are contrary to his purity. But yet God hath, in his own counsels, such secret screws and wires, whereby he doth so wreath and invert these pins, that eventually they advance what they seem directly to oppose. A child perhaps would think, when he sees a husbandman cast dung and soil upon his field, that it were but improvidently done thus to spoil the flourishing verdure and gaiety of the grass and flowers: why that very dung, which covers them, makes them afterwards sprout up more fair and fresh. So God permits wicked men to dung the earth with their filth, that those attributes of his, which seem to be buried under them, may afterwards spring up with the greater lustre and glory: from hence he will reap the richer crop of praise to himself. Sometimes, he glorifies the severity of his justice, by hardening them in their sins to their own destruction; sometimes, the riches of his mercy, by calling the greatest and most flagitious sinners to repentance, and granting them pardon; and, always, his infinite patience and forbearance, in not executing present vengeance upon those, who so daringly provoke him. But, although we cannot now so clearly comprehend the advantages, which God makes out of the sins of men: yet, when we come to stand in the general assembly at the Day of Judgment, God will then comment upon and explain the mysteries of his Providence; and make us understand how those sins, for which he will then condemn the world, put a gloss and shine upon his attributes.

2. God, by permitting sin, *exerciseth the graces of his people.*

The sins of others give us matter for the exercise of a holy zeal for God, who is daily affronted by them; of a holy pity and commiseration over those, who, like madmen, wound and gash and destroy themselves; and for the exercise of a holy caution over ourselves, lest we be induced to sin after their

example. Our own sins give us daily occasion to renew our repentance, to humble our souls before God, to fortify our resolutions, to double the guards we set upon our own hearts and ways, and to watch over ourselves more circumspectly that we relapse not into the commission of them again. Thus, a true Christian may gain some advantage by his very falls: as husbandmen make use of the very thorns and briars which grow in their fields, to stop the gaps and strengthen the fences about them; so should we improve our very sins and failings, to fence our souls, that we lie not open to the like temptations for the future.

Thus, you see that God brings good out of all the evil which he permits: he glorifies his own attributes, and exercises his people's graces.

And thus you see, likewise, God's Providence both proved and vindicated; asserted to be particular and punctual over all occurrences, that happen in the world; and cleared from all the imputations of injustice, that the folly or atheism of man can lay against it.

IV. I shall conclude with two or three INFERENCES or Corollaries.

i. If the accurateness of God's Providence reach unto all the little concernments of the world, we may be well assured, THAT THOSE, WHICH ARE THE MORE CONSIDERABLE AND IMPORTANT OCCURRENCES OF IT, ARE ALL GUIDED AND GOVERNED BY A SPECIAL HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

And, thus, our Saviour himself urgeth, as a strong encouragement for our confidence and trust in God: not a sparrow falls to the ground *without your Father*; fear ye not therefore; ye are of more worth than many sparrows: yea, not a hair of your head falls without a Providence, and think ye that the head itself shall? certainly, God doth not, like Domitian, busy himself about flies, and neglect the great and weighty affairs of his government. And this is the reason of that question, which the Apostle asks, 1 Cor. ix. 9. *Doth God take care for oxen?* yes, certainly he doth; nor did the Apostle intend to deny it, but thereby to infer that certainly his care is much more particular towards us. This, then, may establish our hearts under any personal sufferings, or public calamities; when evil is upon

ourselves, or the nation; when uproars and confusions seem to reduce the world back to its ancient chaos; when storms and waves overwhelm the ship, and we, with the disciples, think our God asleep, and begin to cry out, with the Psalmist, *Awake, O Lord, why sleepest thou?* Our God is not sleeping, but even then at the helm: he steers, he governs and guides all these disorders; and will conduct the whole tumult and hurry of affairs to his own glory and our good.

ii. If God's Providence hath the command and sway even over the sins of men, this then may be ABUNDANT MATTER OF PEACE AND SATISFACTION, IN THE WORST OF TIMES, WHEN WICKEDNESS DOTH MOST OF ALL RAGE AND ABOUND.

Let us then consider, that, if God permits them, he also can, when he pleaseth, check and put a stop and period to their rage and madness. Their hands are fettered by the adamantine chains of a most strong decree, which they can neither reverse nor exceed: whatsoever they do, is but by permission; a limited, and a limiting permission. Our Saviour tells Pilate, *Thou couldst have no power over me, except it were given thee from above.* The very power, that men have to sin against God, is from God; and therefore, certainly, he will withdraw it, when it doth not work out his own ends. This was it, that satisfied David, when Shimei pelted him with stones and curses: 2 Sam. xvi. 10. *Let him alone: let him curse; because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*

iii. Hence see TO WHAT WE OUGHT TO ASCRIBE IT, THAT THERE IS NO MORE NOTORIOUS WICKEDNESS COMMITTED IN THE WORLD.

When we hear of any prodigious villainy, we are apt to wonder, that ever such abominations should be incident to the sons of men. Wonder not at the matter, as if any strange thing were happened to them; but rather wonder at the goodness of God, which is the sole cause that such things as these are wonders. Were his permissive providence as large, as men's lusts are outrageous, these things would soon cease to be wonders, and become the common and ordinary practice of all men. Why are not our streets continually filled with violence, rapine, murders, and outcries? whence is it, that we enjoy our possessions and our lives in safety? The wickedness of men lies hard and presses upon God's restraints; and, wheresoever there are any gaps in it, it breaks forth naturally and violently; and, if

this dam and mound of Divine Providence were but broken down, it would break out till it had overflowed the whole face of the earth, and covered it with a deluge of impiety and profaneness: but that God, who sets bounds to the raging of the sea, and saith Hitherto shall thy proud waves come and no farther, doth, by the same Almighty Providence, set bounds to the lusts and corruptions of men, which are altogether as unruly; and curbs in the fury of their madness, which else would drown the whole world in perdition and destruction.

iv. This should teach us TO ACQUIESCE AND REST SATISFIED IN EVERY PROVIDENCE OF GOD, AS THAT, WHICH WILL CERTAINLY, IN THE END, REDOUND TO HIS OWN GLORY.

When we see disorders and confusions abroad in the world, we are apt to despond and to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name? thy honour, thy glory lies bleeding, and suffers through the sins of men." Commit thy care to God. He will certainly so wield their lusts, as that they shall bring about and effect his own ends. God is glorifying himself, even by these things; and why then should we be troubled? This thought, kept alive on our hearts, would cause us to rest satisfied amidst all the tumults which we observe and hear of in the world: for, though we know not how to unwind these ravelled dispensations to the bottom of his glory, yet he can and will. There is an invisible and wise hand, that moulds and fashions all: and, though the parts by themselves may appear rude and unpolished; yet, put the whole frame and series of Providence together, and that will appear most admirable and glorious.

Now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

Read
15 Feb 1835
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A
DISCOURSE

UPON THE
OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD:

WITH THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREOF.

PSAL. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10.

WHITHER SHALL I GO FROM THY SPIRIT? OR WHITHER SHALL I FLEE FROM THY PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND UP INTO HEAVEN, THOU ART THERE: IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD, THOU ART THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE MORNING, AND DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE SEA; EVEN THERE SHALL THY HAND LEAD ME, AND THY RIGHT-HAND SHALL HOLD ME.

THESE words declare to us the glorious attribute of God's Immensity or Omnipresence, set forth in most elegant and lofty terms; as if the Prophet would mitigate that dread which might well seize upon us, from the consideration of the terrible majesty of God being so near us, by the sweetness and flourishing of the expression, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* This question doth not imply, that David was indeed contriving how to make an escape from God; nor pondering with himself in what forlorn corner of the world he might lie obscure, where the presence of God should never apprehend him: but this interrogation serveth for a vehement assertion: whither shall I go? that is, there is no place whither I can go, or where I can imagine to go, but thy Spirit and thy Presence will be with me. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* that is, either from thee, who art a spirit, and so canst pierce and penetrate me; be as truly and essentially in the very bowels and marrow of my soul, as my soul is intimately and essentially in my body: *from thy Spirit*; that is, from thy knowledge and thy power; thy knowledge to detect and observe me, thy power to uphold or to crush me.

In what dark corner or cavern soever I should muffle myself, yet thy presence is so universal, that it would find me out; for it stretcheth itself from heaven to hell: *If I make my bed in hell.* By *hell*, here, may be meant the Grave, which is often so called in Scripture; as Acts ii. 27. Ps. xvi. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my*

soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption ; (a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ from the grave :) that is, thou wilt not leave my person in the grave : so it is interpreted v. 31. when it is said, that *his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption* : Gen. xxxvii. 35. Jacob, speaking concerning the supposed death of his son Joseph, says, *I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning* : there, and Job xvii. 13. that word which we translate *the grave*, we here translate *hell* : “ Now,” saith the Prophet, “ though I should go down to the grave, and be covered from the sight, and forgotten out of the mind and thoughts of men ; yet thou art there, and observest every dust how it moulders and crumbles away : my body cannot be more in the grave, than thou art there.” If we take *hell* for the Place of the Damned, God’s presence is there likewise : one would think, if from any place God would exclude himself, it should be from *hell*, since his presence is sufficient to make a heaven any where ; but, so infinite is his unlimited being, that, when the body is in the grave and the soul in hell, yet then is God present, both with the soul and with the body : *If I make my bed in hell*, that is, “ If I cover myself never so close and draw the curtains of the thickest darkness round about me ; if my body should lie in the deepest entrails of the earth, and my soul be wrapt about with a winding-sheet of smoke and flames ; yet thou art there, and thy presence would soon find me out :” Job xxvi. 6. *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering* : yea, the Apostle tells us, 2 Thess. i. 9. that the wicked, in hell, *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* : that is, not only that their punishment shall be to be separated from the presence of the Lord ; but, look how they are said to be punished *from the glory of his power*, so likewise are they to be punished *from his presence* : their destruction shall be *from the glory of his power* ; that is, his power in inflicting most dreadful punishments upon them, and his power in sustaining them under those punishments, when with one hand the Lord shall hold them up in hell, and lift up the other as high as heaven to give them redoubled strokes of everlasting vengeance : so, likewise, they shall be punished *from the presence of the Lord* ; that is, God himself will be present in hell to torment and punish them, that, at the very same time that he shall be a cherishing God in heaven, he will be a tormenting God in hell : because, in them, he hath

established his two great thrones; the one of his mercy, the other of his justice.

But yet, possibly, there may be found some neglected place here below, where God hath no such concernment to be present, as he hath to be present in Heaven and in Hell. Now, saith the Psalmist, vv. 9, 10. *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me. Wings of the Morning* is an elegant metaphor; and, by them, we may conjecture is meant the sun-beams: called *Wings*, because of their swift and speedy motion; making their passage so sudden and so instantaneous, as that they do prevent the observation of the eye; called *the Wings of the Morning*, because the dawn of the morning comes flying in upon these wings of the sun, and brings light along with it; and, by heating and fanning of these wings, scatters the darkness before it. “Now” saith the Psalmist, “if I could pluck these wings of the morning, the sun-beams; if I could imp my own shoulders with them; if I should fly as far and as swift as light, even in an instant, to *the uttermost parts of the sea*; yea, if in my flight I could spy out some solitary rock, so formidable and dismal as if we might almost call in question whether ever a Providence had been there; if I could pitch there on the top of it, where never any thing had made its abode, but coldness, thunders, and tempests: yet there *shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me.*”

Thus you see the text declares this Ubiquity and Omnipresence of God, both in heaven and earth and hell, and in all places and in all things.

I shall, first, handle this point doctrinally; and, then, practically. Observing this method, I shall,

Lay down some Positions.

Demonstrate the truth of them, by some cogent and convincing Arguments.

Answer some Objections, which may be made against the Omnipresence of God.

Make some Improvement of this point.

I. I am to lay down some POSITIONS.

POSITION i. GOD IS INTIMATELY AND ESSENTIALLY IN ALL PARTS AND PLACES OF THE WORLD.

Yea, this presence, being essential, is also necessary; so that it is simply impossible, that God should not be wheresoever the creature is. By the World, I mean whatsoever was at the beginning created by the power of God; the heavens, the air, the earth and sea, and all things visible and invisible: God is with them and in them all.

There are Three things briefly to be touched upon here.

1. That *God is intimately present with the creatures.*

He passeth through their very beings and inward parts: he is in the very centre of their essence; and this flows from the spirituality of his essence. From hence it is, that it is impossible that he should be excluded out of the most close compacted being. Bodies cannot thus enter one another, because of their gross and material substances: they can only stand without, and knock for admission: they cannot enter into the substance one of another: water, when sucked up by a sponge, doth not pass into the substantial part of it; but only fills up those caverns and hollow pores, which were before filled with air: the air we breathe in cannot enter into the substance of our bodies; but only into those pores and hollow recesses, which are by nature fitted to receive it: so of all other corporeal beings. But spirits are not tied up to this law: the soul of man, because it is a spirit, resides not only in the empty void spaces of the body, but also in the midst of the most solid and substantial part of it: angels, who are a degree of spiritual beings above the soul, cannot be excluded from being present in the most condensed bodies; and we know not how often they are in us; we know not how often they pass through us, nor how many of them are now present with us: we read of no less than a legion, which is six thousand, that quartered themselves together in one possessed person, Mark v. 9: then, certainly God, between whom and the angels there is infinitely more distance than between angels and bodies, cannot possibly be shut out of any being, but diffuseth himself to every part of his creatures.

2. God is not only intimately present with his creatures, because as he is a spirit he passeth through the most inmost part of them, but *he is intimately present with all his creatures at once.*

And, therein, is his presence distinguished from the presence of angels. They, indeed, pass from one to another, and be one in another: they may, possibly, stretch and dilate them-

selves to a great compass; but they cannot stretch themselves to an ubiquitariness, to be in all beings at once: if an angel suddenly dart himself from one point of the heavens, through the centre of the earth, to an opposite point of the heavens, and by a motion of insinuation, without impelling or driving the air before him, yet he is not in heaven and earth at once; but, when he is in one place, he ceaseth to be in another. But it is not so with God, for he is every where and in all things at once for ever: therefore God asks us, *Do not I fill heaven and earth?* Jer. xxiii. 24: he is so in them, as that he doth not leave any one place void or empty of himself; for, were there any places where God were not, then it could not be properly said to be filled with him.

3. *This Omnipresence of God is simply necessary, not only for the preserving and upholding of his creatures in their beings and operations, but necessary to our very beings.*

For his own essence is simple; and he cannot withdraw from nor forsake any place or any thing, with which his presence now is: God cannot contract and lessen himself, nor gather up his essence into a narrow room and compass; but, as he is here in this very place which we now take up, so he must and will be here to all eternity. Nor is this any imperfection, as if God were not an infinite perfection and excellence; for this flows from the immutability of his nature and essence: for, should God remove himself, he were not altogether unchangeable; but, with him, there is neither change nor *shadow of turning*: James i. 17. What the Heathens thought of this Immensity and Omnipresence of God is somewhat obscure. Some of them confined him to heaven; and were so far from affirming him present in all things, that they thought he took no care of any thing below, as being too mean and too unworthy for God to regard; this was the opinion of the Epicureans, Acts xvii. 18: others thought, indeed, that the care and providence of God reached to these ordinary things, but not his essence; and the ground of their error was, because they thought it most befitting the Majesty of God, to sit only in heaven, a glorious and a becoming place, and not to make himself so cheap and so common, as to be present with men and the vile things of the world; but this is a weak reason, as I shall shew anon. Some others among the Heathens had righter apprehensions of this divine attribute: one of them, being to give a description what

God was, tells us most admirably, "God is a sphere, whose centre is every where, and whose circumference is no where:" a raised apprehension of the divine nature in a Heathen! and another, being demanded what God was, made answer, that "God is an Infinite Point;" than which nothing can be said more (almost) or truer, to declare this Omnipresence of God. It is reported of Heraclitus the philosopher, when his friend came to visit him, being in an old rotten hovel, "Come in, come in," saith he, "for God is here:" God is in the meanest cottage, as well as in the stateliest palace: the poorest beggar cohabits with God, as well as the greatest princes; for God is every where present and sees all things.

POSITION II. GOD IS NOT ONLY PRESENT IN THE WORLD, BUT HE IS INFINITELY EXISTENT ALSO WITHOUT THE WORLD, AND BEYOND ALL THINGS BUT HIMSELF.

He is in all that vast tract of nothing, which we can imagine, and beyond the highest heavens. What reason can say for this, I shall anon shew. In the mean time, see that one positive place of Scripture, 1 Kings viii. 27. *Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain him:* and if God be not contained in them, certainly he then must be infinitely beyond and above them: he surmounts the heaven of heavens, that is, the very highest and uppermost heavens, which St. Paul calls the *third heaven*: 2 Cor. xii. 2. that glorious place, in which God doth most specially manifest himself, and will do to all eternity. The Scripture tells us, that, though the heaven of the glorified angels and saints be the place in which God will especially manifest his presence, yet it is not that place unto which God will or doth confine his presence: Isai. lxvi. 1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made:* as if God should have said, "Do not think to cloister me up within the walls of the Temple: no; I am set upon the highest heavens, as upon my throne; and they are all under me, and I am exalted far above them." Many such glorious expressions there are of God's infiniteness and immensity scattered up and down the Scripture, which I shall not now spend time to recollect. The Scripture, you see, owns it for a truth, that God is infinite in his essence, beyond the whole world: which is one of those

divine properties, the possibility whereof it poseth reason to conceive; that since, beyond the world there is nothing, God should exist there. But, though reason cannot apprehend it, yet from reason, as well as from Scripture, it appears it must be so.

POSITION iii. AS GOD EXISTS EVERY WHERE, SO ALL AND WHOLE GOD EXISTS EVERY WHERE. So that all God is here, and all God is there, and all God is in every place and in every thing.

This is, indeed, a great and most inconceivable mystery: but yet it must needs be so; because God is indivisible and simple, and not compounded of parts: and, therefore, wherever there is any of God's essence, there is all his essence; otherwise, part of his essence would be here, and part there, and part of it elsewhere, which would be utterly repugnant to the simple and uncompounded nature of God. God's attributes are his essence: now there is no where, where God is, but there are all his attributes; and, therefore, where God is, there is all his essence. He is a spirit, most wise, most powerful, most just, and the like; here, and there, as well as in heaven above. Yea, and what is more, to the astonishment of reason, than all this, God is every where omnipresent, and in every place. And, though it be common to all spiritual beings, because they have no parts, to have a totality in the whole and a totality in every part: (indeed it is expressed in the Schools, that spirits are all in the whole, and all in every part;) yet, herein, God hath a peculiar way of subsisting from other spirits, that not only his essence alone is in every part of the world, but also his presence is in all and every part of the world; so that God is every where present: which is beyond the reach of our apprehensions; yet it is undoubtedly true, for God's omnipresence being that attribute which belongs to him, he is present every where and in all things.

II. Now for the rational DEMONSTRATIONS, whereby it may be evinced, that God is omnipresent.

i. That God is PRESENT EVERY WHERE IN THIS WORLD I shall make good by these arguments:

1. *From his unchangeableness.*

If there be any place where God is not, then God may be there, because he is omnipotent: but if God may be there,

where he is not actually also, then it must be by motion to that place: but it is impossible that God should be able to move from one place to another, because he is immutable: therefore, hence it clearly follows, that there is no place, where God is not, and where he was not from all eternity.

2. It may be demonstrated, that God is omnipresent *from his preservation of all things in their beings.*

God is present with whatsoever he preserves: but he preserves every thing in its being: therefore he is present every where. There is required as great a power to preserve creatures from falling back into their first nothing, as there was to make them at first out of nothing; for preservation, as the philosopher speaks, is nothing else but a continued and a prolonged creation: now he cannot create any thing at a distance from it, because no creature is fit to convey a creative action, and because also whatever virtue or power is in God it is his essence: therefore, if he create or preserve by his power, he creates and preserves immediately by his essence, and so his essence must be whatsoever his operations are.

ii. But God exists not only in the world, but INFINITELY BEYOND THE WORLD ALSO. That may be demonstrated,

From the Infiniteness of his Nature and Essence.

From the Infiniteness of his Perfections.

From his Almighty Power: and

From his Eternity.

1. *From the Infiniteness of God's Nature or Essence.*

That nature, which is infinite, cannot be bounded or limited: but God's nature is infinite: therefore, it cannot be bounded. But if God were only present in the world, and did not exist infinitely beyond it, then his being and nature could not be infinite as a spirit is infinite: therefore, if God should be included in the world, he would also be but infinite as the world.

2. *From the Infiniteness of his Perfections,* we may argue thus:

That, which is infinitely perfect, must be infinitely great: but God is infinitely perfect; so that there is no perfection, which we can imagine, but is eminently in God: therefore he must be infinitely great; so as there can be no space which we can imagine, but he must be present in it. But we can imagine an infinite space beyond this world: therefore God is there;

because there is no perfection imaginable, which God hath not. Whatever is infinitely perfect, must be infinitely great; as appears from this, because the greater a thing is, the more perfect it is of that same kind, as a great piece of gold is more excellent than a less: and, therefore, from this perfection of God, it appears, that he is every where, he being all perfection.

3. As it is demonstrated from God's infiniteness and perfection, so likewise *from his Almighty Power*.

God can create another world greater than this, even in that imaginary space, which we can conceive beyond this world: therefore, certainly, God is now existent there.

4. God's omnipresence may be argued *from the Eternity of God*.

God was infinitely existent before the creation of the world; since he is eternal, and the world but temporal: the world hath stood only but some few thousands of years, and before the creation of the world there was nothing but God, and God existed eternally in himself: therefore, though beyond this world there be nothing, yet God will be there actually existing in that same imaginary space beyond this world, as he did exist in an imaginary space before this world was created.

Thus I have done with the Propositions, and the confirmation of them by rational Arguments; those things, which relate to the philosophical part of the text, for informing the judgment in the notion of that stupendous attribute of God's Omnipresence.

III. I shall now come to answer some OBJECTIONS.

OBJECT. i. The first is taken from those Scriptures, where it seems to be implied, that God moves from place to place: as in Gen. xviii. 21. where the Lord saith, concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, *I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me*: and, in Hab. iii. 3. it is said, *God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran, &c.*

“Now these places, which speak of going to and departing from places, seem to oppose God's ubiquity; because motion is inconsistent with God's omnipresence.”

I answer: These and the like Scriptures are not to be taken

properly and literally ; but as accommodated to our capacity and conception : even as parents, when they speak to their little children, will sometimes lisp and babble in their language ; so God oftentimes condescends to us in speaking our language, for the declaring of those things which are far above our reach. But you will say, “ How are such places to be understood ? ” I answer : When God is said to come unto or to depart from any place or person, nothing else must be understood thereby, but a declaring or not declaring of himself to be present. As men, when they manifest themselves present, do it by moving hither or thither : so God, to accommodate himself thereunto, when he manifests his presence any where, tells us, that he goes thither ; and, when that manifestation ceaseth, he tells us he departs thence ; though he was always there present, both before and after that manifestation. So that these expressions used in the Scripture, concerning God, though spoken after the manner of men, yet must be understood after the manner of God, that is, with a suitableness and conformity to his Infinite Essence.

OBJECT. ii. “ The Scripture tells us, that hereafter in heaven *we shall see God as he is* : but is not that impossible ? If God be an omnipresent God, we shall not be able to comprehend him, because we shall not ourselves be infinite in heaven : and, if man be still finite, how then can he comprehend what is infinite ; since infinite is comprehended of nothing, but that which is infinite ? ”

I answer : Such Scriptures are not to be understood, as if the capacities of angels, much less of men, are or ever shall be wide and capacious enough to contain the infinite greatness of God : no ; his omnipresence is not comprehended by angels themselves, nor shall be by man for ever. But they must be understood comparatively : our vision and sight of God, here, is but through a glass darkly ; but, in heaven, it shall be with so much more brightness and clearness, that, in comparison of the obscure and glimmering way whereby we know God here, it may be called a seeing of him face to face, and knowing him as we are known by him ; though, to speak in absolute propriety of speech, these things are not possible to any creature.

OBJECT. iii. “ It may seem no small disparagement to God to be every where present. What ! for the Glorious Majesty of

God to be present in such vile and filthy places, as are here upon earth?"

To this I answer,

1. *God doth not think it any disparagement to him, nor think it unworthy of him, to know and make all these, which we call vile and filthy places: why then should we think it unworthy of him to be present there?*

2. *God is a Spirit, and is not capable of any pollution or defilement from any vile or filthy things.* The sun-beams are no more tainted by shining on a dunghill, than they are by shining on a bed of spices: no more can God be sullied by being present in filthy sinks, (to speak with reverence,) than to be in the glorious heavens; because he is a spirit, and his essence is not subject to any taints from the creature.

3. *The vilest things, that are, have still a being, that is good in their own kind; and as well-pleasing to God, as those things, which we put a greater value and esteem upon.*

4. *It reflects no more dishonour upon God, to be present with the vilest creatures, than to be present with the noblest and highest; because the angels are at an infinite distance from God. There is a greater disproportion between God and the angels, than there is between the vilest worm and an angel; all are at an infinite distance to his glory and majesty.*

Thus much, for the Objections.

IV. APPLICATION.

USE i. Is God thus infinitely present every where, and thus in and with all his creatures? then WHAT AN ENCOURAGEMENT IS HERE UNTO PRAYER!

Thou canst not say, "Alas! I now pray; but how shall God hear? He is in heaven above, and I am on earth below, many thousands of miles distant from his presence: how then shall my weak whisperings, that can scarce reach the walls of mine own closet, ever be able to reach his ear?" No, God's essential presence is with thee, wheresoever thou art, as he is in heaven itself; and God is all ear: he can understand the silent motions of thy lips everywhere: yea, he can understand the secret motions of thy heart. When Hannah prayed for her son Samuel, Eli, the priest of God, thought her gesture did

proceed from a distempered head, and not from a holy heart: but God was present with her lips; and that prayer, which was thought by the priest of God to be but a dumb shew, yet to God himself was powerful rhetoric and as loud as thunder in his ears. The Scripture generally intimates, that all our prayers shall be directed to God in heaven: so Solomon prayed, 1 Kings viii. 32. *Then hear thou in heaven, &c*: and it is again expressed, in the 30th verse: so, that most excellent composure, which Christ taught his disciples, in the beginning of it, *Our Father, which art in heaven*, gives our thoughts a lift to heaven.

Now this doth not imply, that God doth nowhere hear our prayers, but only in heaven.

But how, then? Why is this phrase used? For these Two reasons:

1. *Because heaven is the most glorious place*: there God, especially, hath established his Throne of Grace, and sits upon it.

Now, because it is most glorious and majestic, and since God is there to hear the suits and receive petitions which are tendered up by all his servants here on earth, therefore the Scripture directeth us to that most glorious and celestial place: *Hear thou in heaven*. Hence we have that expression, Acts x. 4. *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. Certainly, if our prayers should not be heard till they come to heaven, they are so weak and faint, that they would be out of breath by the way, and not be able then to speak for themselves. But, yet, God speaks in us by his Spirit, and keeps alive the sense of his majesty upon our hearts, that he would not have us think it to be a mean and trivial thing to have our prayers heard: therefore he represents himself to us arrayed in all his glory.

2. Our prayers are directed to God in heaven, *because, though he hears them wherever they be uttered; yet he nowhere hears them with acceptance, but in heaven only*.

Our prayers are accepted by God, because they are heard in heaven. Thy prayers are not accepted by God, because God hears them upon earth; as they are heard in thy closet, or as they are heard in thy heart; but only as they are heard in heaven: and the reason is, because prayers are acceptable, only as they are presented before God in the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ: he must mingle them with the incense of

his merits, before they can ascend up before God as a sweet savour. Now Christ performs his Mediatory Office nowhere but in heaven: for though, as God, he be everywhere present, as the Father is, and therefore hears your prayers wheresoever they be put up; yet, as Mediator, they are only heard in heaven by him; and he hears no prayers, but the prayers of his people, as he is Mediator: and, therefore, it is no comfort to you, that Christ hears your prayers, as he is God only, for so he doth and cannot but do it; unless he hears your prayers, likewise, as he is Mediator. Now Christ, as he is Mediator, is God-Man; for, as he wrought out our salvation in both natures, so he still continues to mediate for us in both natures: and, since the human nature is only in heaven, therefore it follows, he performs the mediatory office only in heaven. Now it is the mediatorship of Christ alone, that makes all our prayers and duties acceptable to God himself: therefore it concerns us still to pray, "*Lord, hear us in heaven.*" It is in vain, that thou hearest me on earth, unless thou hearest in heaven too. My prayers cannot be heard acceptably, unless thou hearest them twice. Thou hearest my prayers on earth; not a word of my tongue but thou hearest: but what will it avail thy servant, unless thou hearest my prayers a second time repeated over to thee in the intercession and mediation of Jesus Christ in heaven? And therefore, saith Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 34. *Hear thou in heaven, and forgive*: when God shall only hear on earth, he will be so far from forgiving, that he will be avenged; but, when he hears our prayers in heaven, through the mediation of Christ, then he is inclined to forgive and pardon us. Hence we find, that the Jews prayed towards the temple, which was a type of heaven; and the altar and incense and mercy-seat in this temple were types of Christ, who is now in heaven: and therefore Daniel, when in Babylon, prayed, his window being open towards Jerusalem, towards the temple; as if no prayer were acceptable to God, but what was heard in heaven: so Jonah, when he was in the belly of the whale, Jonah ii. 7. *My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple*: Jonah was a strong orator, when he was in the slimy paunch of the whale; yea, but God was there, and God heard him there; but yet his prayer would have been as filthy as his person, if God had not heard him elsewhere than in the belly of the whale: *My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple*; that is, God

heard him in heaven: and, therefore, though the breath of Jonah could have no sweetness, yet the prayer that he breathed forth came up as incense and a sweet perfume before God as it came into the holy temple. Thus God hears the prayers of his in heaven; but the prayers of the wicked he hears only upon earth: he hears them when they speak them, but God never hears their prayers in the mediation of Christ; but the prayers of his own people he hears on earth as he is an omnipresent and omnipotent God, and he hears them in heaven as he is a gracious and reconciled Father. If thou dost but whisper thy prayer, God will hear it: that, which is but whispered on earth, rings and echoes in the Court of Heaven; and, if Christ speaks your prayers over to God, they become so loud, that God cannot stop his ears against them. The voice of prayer is not like other voices: the further they reach, the weaker they grow: no; that voice, which is so weak that it cannot be heard beyond the compass of thy closet, yet when it is put forth in prayer, fills all heaven with its sound.

“But where is the encouragement unto prayer in all this?” If thou dost belong to God, thou mayest have great encouragement to prayer from the consideration of his Omnipresence: for, because of this, there is no prayer of a child of God but shall be heard in heaven though it be uttered in secret. For consider, that though Christ, as Man, is only in heaven; yet Christ, as God, is everywhere present, and hears the prayers of all men in the world. Those, who are wicked, he regards no further; but gives them the hearing: but, for his own, he regards their prayers, and presents what he hears from them to God in heaven. Christ makes his omniscience and omnipresence to be subservient to the work of his mediatorship. One of his offices is, to be a faithful High-Priest and an Advocate to God for us; and Christ, being such an advocate as hears all the suits and all the causes of his clients, we may be assured, that there is not one prayer, which God hears on earth from us, but he hears it also in heaven, through Christ.

It was a notable scoff of Elijah to Baal's priests, 1 Kings xviii. 27. *Cry aloud; for he is a god, &c. peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked*: as if he should say, “You serve an unworthy God, that cannot hear those, who pray unto him! And, indeed, how should he do so, that is not omnipresent? *He is talking, or he is pursuing, or travelling; Cry! Cry aloud!* and, peradventure,

if he sleepeth, that will awaken him. But, though you should cry never so loud, though your cry should reach from earth to heaven, he would be silent : such a God as yours could never hear." And, therefore, when Elijah himself came to pray, v. 36, the text doth not tell us he cried aloud, but that he came near ; but, when Baal's priests roared and howled, like distracted men, and cut themselves in an idolatrous manner, Baal is not prevailed with to hear them. Now, Elijah *came near* ; that is, he came in a calm and sedate manner, and poured out his fervent composition to God ; as knowing, that that God, whom he prayed to, is present everywhere.

The voice in prayer is necessary, upon a Threefold account :

(1) As it is that, which God requires should be employed in his service : for this is the great end why our tongues were given to us, that, by them, we might bless and serve God : James iii. 9.

(2) When, in private, it may be a help and means to raise up our own affections and devotions, then the voice is requisite ; keeping it still within the bounds of decency or privacy.

(3) In our joining also with others, it is a help likewise to raise and quicken their affections.

Otherwise, were it not for these three reasons, the voice is no more necessary to make known our wants to God, than it is to make them known to our own hearts ; for God is always in us and with us, and knows what we have need of before we ask it.

USE ii. As the consideration of God's omnipresence should encourage us in prayer, as knowing that God certainly hears us ; so it should AFFECT US WITH A HOLY AWE AND REVERENCE OF GOD, in all our prayers and duties, and in the whole course of our lives and conversations.

Certainly, it is an excellent meditation, to prepare our hearts to duty, and to compose them in duty, to be much pondering the Omnipresence of God : to think that I am with God : he is present in the room with me, even in the congregation with me, and likewise in my closet, and in all my converse and dealings in the world. How can it be possible for that man to be frothy and vain, who keeps this thought alive in his heart ? If the presence of some earthly person strike an awe in our hearts

when we come before them, how much more should the consideration of God's presence affect us with a holy fear! suppose an angel should fly in the midst of us, who are here present, with a rushing and dazzling glory, how would it make all our hearts beat and throb within us! it would make us soon abandon all those vain thoughts, which now we feed upon; those thoughts, which eat out the heart and life of duty. How much more should it affect us and fill us with holy fear, that that God is now and always in the midst of us, whose glory stains and sullies the beauty and extinguishes the light of angels! Oh! that God, who is always present with us, should be worshipped and served with a holy fear, and remembered with the greatest veneration.

Now, to imprint this the more deeply, I shall suggest two or three particulars.

1. *Because God is in all things, therefore he sees and knows all things.*

The omniscience of God is grounded upon his omnipresence: Jer. xxiii. 24. *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* Nothing in heaven or earth can be hid or concealed from God's eye: Heb. iv. 13. *All things are naked and opened before the Lord.* There is no corner so retired, so shady, so dark, no gulf so deep, that can hide any thing from the piercing discovery of his eye. He knows our thoughts, those nimble and those spiritual things, which are so quick in their flight that they cannot be seized upon by any creature in the world; God knows them: the Devil cannot know them, nor can an angel know them; yet God discerns our thoughts more clearly than we can discern the faces of one another: he sees our *thoughts afar off*, as the Psalmist tells us: he sees our thoughts in their first conception, when they first begin to heave in our breasts: he knows the least windings and turnings of our souls. Now would not this compose us to a habitual and holy awe of God, to be continually thinking, that, whatsoever we do, God's eye is now upon us? Let every one say within himself, "Wherever I am, or whatever I do, I am in the presence of the Holy God, who takes notice of all my carriages: there is not a glance of mine eye, but his eye observes it: there is not an irreverent or unseemly gesture, but he takes notice of it: not a thought of mine can escape, but he knows that thought:

and he knows my down-lying and up-rising, &c." Let this consideration season your lives and conversations: be still pondering in your minds, that, whatsoever you are doing, his eye is upon you, and he is present with you.

2. Consider, that *God not only sees into all you do, but he sees it to that very end that he may examine and search into it.*

He doth not only behold you with a common and indifferent look; but with a searching, watchful, and inquisitive eye: he pries into the reasons, the motives, the ends of all your actions. Psal. xi. 4. it is said, *The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.* Rev. i. 14. where Christ is described, it is said, *his eyes are as a flame of fire*: you know the property of fire is, to search and make trial of those things, which are exposed unto it, and to separate the dross from the pure metal: so, God's eye is like fire, to try and examine the actions of men: he knows and discerns how much your very purest duties have in them of mixture and base ends of formality, hypocrisy, distractedness, and deadness: he sees through all your specious pretences, that which you cast as a mist before the eyes of men, when yet thou art but a juggler in religion: all your tricks and sleights of outward profession, all those things that you use to cozen and delude men withal, cannot possibly impose upon him: he is a God, that can look through all those fig-leaves of outward profession, and discern the nakedness of your duties through them.

3. *God tries all your cases and actions, in order to an eternal judgment and sentence to be passed upon them.*

This consideration might damp the stoutest sinner's heart in the whole world. Believe it, Sirs, God doth not only see your ways, but he sees them so as to remember them against you another day: though you have forgot what you have thought, and what you have spoken, and what you have done; yet God for ever remembers it, and at that day he will sadly recal all these things again to your remembrance. Oh! that therefore this might prevail with you, so to do every thing, as being now already under the eye of God, and as shortly to be under his doom and sentence! If God should send an angel to stand at our backs, and tell us, whatever we are doing, this action of ours we must be judged for; it should make us as fearful of sinning, as that angel himself. True, we have no such monitor; but our conscience performs to us the same office: therefore, charge

it upon your consciences, that they still put you in mind of God; that he sees you; that he will judge you; and that he always looks upon you, and writes down in those eternal leaves of his memorial-book, whatsoever proceeds from you, either in the duties of religion or in the actions of your ordinary course and conversation: therefore, because he is omnipresent and sees all things, stand in awe of his omniscieny; whereby he sees whatsoever we do, and whereby he will try and judge us at the Last Day.

Ch. Rev. 111

Read -

Ch. 111

15 Feb. 1895

A
SERMON*
ON THE
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE ii. 13, 14.

AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS WITH THE ANGEL A MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST, PRAISING GOD, AND SAYING, GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.

IN this chapter we have a most wonderful History of the Nativity of the Son of God: and it is described both by the mean entertainment that earth, and the glorious attendance that heaven afforded him.

His own appearance was but despicable, but the appearance of his retinue was most magnificent and astonishing: he, who

* In a posthumous 8vo. volume, published in 1712, is "An Appendix, containing some passages omitted in that part of the author's works published in folio." Among these passages are found one entire division, and several considerable paragraphs, intended, apparently, for insertion or omission, as the discourse was to be accommodated to one or more times of delivery. This piece was first printed in what is called the Third Volume of Discourses, 8vo. 1694; and was re-printed in the folio of 1701. Some of the sentences of these editions are abridged in the above mentioned Appendix, and others are amplified. The author seems to have preached it as Three distinct Sermons; probably on so many successive Christmas Days. The editors of the 3d octavo and the folio, not knowing of the alterations and additions, printed afterwards in the Appendix, have put together the Discourse as it stands in their editions, entirely omitting the second division of the second head, concerning *Peace on Earth*. I have endeavoured to combine the Appendix with the original text, so as to form one regular Discourse; and such parts of the Appendix as could not be so interwoven, I have given in Notes at the bottom of the page. EDITOR.

was *the Ancient of Days*, became a helpless infant: he, who was the light of the sun, comes into the world in the darkness of the night: he, who came that he might lay us in the bosom of the Father, is himself laid in the manger of a stable. The inn is full, and Joseph the carpenter, and Mary, though big with God, must take up with a stable; and she must lay her blessed burden among beasts and horses, far more hospitable than their owners.

But, though he be meanly welcomed on earth, yet heaven makes abundant amends for all: a company of industrious shepherds, lying all night in the fields by their flocks, while they are watching their sheep, themselves find their own shepherd. Whilst they thought of no apparition, but of some ravenous beasts to devour their herd, an angel is winged away with so great swiftness, that he scatters light round about the place, and tells them of the birth of Christ: but then he bids them search for him in a strange place; telling them that they should find the Lord of Life and Glory in an inn: and a strange circumstance it is, that a holy angel should call the shameful debasement of the King of Heaven *tidings of great joy*, and make it the matter of his jubilee, and triumph upon the delivery of his message. The text tells us, *there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host*: that is, of angels, those heavenly courtiers, leaving the glorious palace of heaven; as well they might, when their King lay here below: and then they second him with this joyful acclamation, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men*.

In these words is contained whatsoever God or man can desire. What Jotham, in the parable speaks concerning the vine, Judges ix. 13, is certainly true of this text: *It cheereth God and man*. God knoweth no higher design than his own glory; and Christ's coming into the world was for the accomplishment of that design. And man can desire no greater happiness than what follows, *Peace and Good-will*: and both these are born into the world, together with Christ.

Now, by this *peace on earth*, may be meant either mutually from men to men, that, upon Christ's birth, men should be at peace one with another: so history informs us, that, about this time, Janus's Temple was shut up, and the whole world was at peace: Florus, the Roman historian, records, that then there was either a peace or a truce in the whole world: and, indeed, it was but fit that war should cease, when the Prince of Peace was born. Or else it may be meant of peace and good-will

from God to man: now peace is not so much as good-will; for where there are not open acts of hostility, yet there may be secret grudges and displeasure: all sinners stand in a double state of distance to God; the one of opposition and defiance, the other of alienation and estrangement: peace destroys the one, and good-will the other; and, in the text, God, by his angel, proclaims both to the world; *peace* to reconcile them, and *good-will* to endear them, and both in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, accordingly, let us take notice,

By whom this heavenly anthem is sung.

What are the contents of it.

I. For the FIRST, it is said, that an innumerable company of the heavenly host praised God.

And we may well wonder what should occasion such mighty expressions of joy in those blessed spirits. Is it a time of joy, when the Great God is introducing himself into our flesh; when he is abasing himself to dust and ashes; when the Infinite God is retiring, and shrinking up himself into a small worm? Is it a time of joy with them, when the brightness of the Deity, from whose reflections only they borrow all their shining and lustre, is now eclipsed in a frail body? Strange, that they should make this day of heaven's humiliation, their festival and day of thanksgiving!

Yet, possibly, we may give a Threefold account of it.

i. The holy angels rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, BECAUSE IT GAVE THEM OCCASION TO TESTIFY THEIR DEEPEST HUMILITY AND SUBJECTION.

To be subject to Christ, whilst he sat upon the throne of his kingdom, arrayed with unapproachable light, controlling all the powers of heaven with a beck, was no more than his dreadful majesty and his infinite glory exacted from them: but, to be subject to him in a cratch, as well as on the throne, when he had, as it were, hid his beams, and made himself recluse in the human nature; (for the angels are subject to him when as the Apostle speaks, Heb. ii. 8. *We see not yet all things put under him*;) this was not obedience only, but in a sense it was a condescension. Some of the Schoolmen, those busy priors into all the secrets of heaven, think that the pride, which tumbled the apostate angels out of heaven, was their disdaining to serve Christ in his state of exinanition and abasement; which they

then, by revelation, knew would certainly come to pass in the fulness of time: and that the rest of their fellow-angels preserved their station, by professing their cheerful willingness to be common servants to the Mediator, when he himself should appear in the form of a servant. Now is the time of their trial: their King, whose infinite essence gilds all the universe, doth now lie housed in a stable, cradled in a manger: there he lies, under all the dishonours of men, obscure in his birth, and shortly to be exposed to hardships, to the assaults of the Devil, to buffetings and cruel scourgings, and at last to die as a malefactor. This is that *stone of stumbling*, which hath long lain in the way both of the Jews and Gentiles: this is the scandal of the cross, which their pride would never stoop to: this is the *foolishness* of the Gospel, which *the wisdom of the world* did deride. What! for God to command them to believe in such a contemptible person as Jesus of Nazareth! what were this, but to destroy their reason, that he might save their souls? they scorn to own him, in his meanness, for their Saviour; whom yet the glorious angels scorn not to own, even in his meanness, for their Lord and King. And, therefore, we find how ready they are to wait upon him, in the greatest instance of his abasement: when he was in the wilderness, among howling beasts, tempted by the Devil, that roaring lion, it is said, then angels *ministered unto him*: Mat. iv. 11: when he was in an agony, and the heavy sense of God's wrath squeezed from him large drops of bloody sweat, an angel, it is said, strengthened him: Luke xxii. 43. And now the time is come, wherein they may express their fidelity and obedience, in the lowest estate of their Lord. And this is the first reason, why the holy angels rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, because now they have an opportunity of expressing their humility and subjection to their Lord and King.

ii. The angels rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, BECAUSE THE CONFIRMATION OF THAT BLESSED ESTATE OF GRACE AND GLORY, WHEREIN THEY NOW STAND, DEPENDED UPON HIS INCARNATION.

God, upon Christ's undertaking the great work of his Mediatorship, made over to him the whole world, as it were, by deed of gift: Mat. xxviii. 18. *All power, saith Christ, is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* The government of all creatures is laid upon his shoulders: and, therefore, if there be so great a multitude of holy angels preserved in their blissful state be-

yond all danger of apostasy, it must only be ascribed to Christ as God-Man. Hence he is styled, Col. ii. 10. *the head of all principality and power*: they are members of Christ, as well as we: they are united to him by love, as we are by faith: they are part of the Church of Christ, as well as we: they are glorified saints, triumphing in heaven; we, militant on earth, and aspiring thither. Eph. i. 10. It is said, God gathers *together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him*: we and they are sheltered together under the same veil of Christ's flesh: and, as the saints on earth derive from Christ the grace of perseverance, which keeps them from drawing back to perdition; so also do the angels in heaven. Once, when the Great God hurled the apostate spirits down into the burning lake, their own wills were then mutable, and their estate too: they might have conspired in the same rebellion, and partaken of the same destruction; but that, it is probable, the Mediator interposed to secure and confirm them: and therefore they rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, wherein they saw the Godhead actually united to the human nature; since the merit of this union, long before that, prevailed for their happy perseverance.

iii. The holy angels rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, FROM THE FERVENT DESIRE THEY HAVE OF MAN'S SALVATION.

Many thrones in heaven are vacant: God hath expelled thence many legions of devils: and it is the fancy of some, that the number of those, who shall be saved, is equal to the number of the fallen angels; as if they were appointed by God, to succeed in their places and dignities. Now the angels have an earnest desire to have these rooms filled; and to have more members added to their Heavenly Corporation: hence we find, Luke xv. 10. *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*: the news of a sinner's conversion is entertained with applause: it makes a festival in heaven, that now another man is made a free denizen of that holy city. And, if they thus rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, needs must they rejoice at the Incarnation of a Saviour; since this is the root and foundation of our conversion, of our hope, and of all our happiness. Thus you see the reasons, why the holy angels rejoiced so exceedingly at the Birth of Christ.

That is the First particular propounded: by whom this joy is proclaimed, namely, *a multitude of the heavenly host.*

II. I might likewise have added, that the angels rejoiced at the Birth of Christ, because there is laid in it the great and wonderful design of God's glory; but that falls into the Second General, and that is, **WHAT THIS ANGELICAL SONG CONTAINS IN IT.**

It is set down in Three most amiable and excellent things, Glory, Peace, and Good-Will, which are here applied to their several objects; *Glory to God, Peace on earth, and Good-Will towards men.*

i. To begin with the first, **GOD'S GLORY.**

Now God's glory is of two sorts, essential and declarative.

God's Essential Glory is nothing else, but the infinite perfections of his own nature: it is a constellation of all his unconceivable attributes, of wisdom, power, holiness, and the like, into his own ever blessed essence. And, thus, God was from all eternity: before ever there was creature made to admire him, he was infinitely glorious in himself.

The Declarative Glory of God is nothing else, but that visible splendor and lustre, which reflects from the Essential Glory, upon the notice and intimation that the creatures have of it. Thus we are said, to give glory to God; not that we can contribute any thing to him, and set any jewels in his crown, which did not shine there before; but when we observe and admire those bright corruscations of his attributes, which appear in several ways that God takes to express them: then we glorify God, when we admire those strictures of God's Essential Glory, which appear in his attributes. So, here, when the angels sung, *Glory to God in the highest*; the meaning is, "Let heaven and earth behold, with admiration, and acknowledge those attributes of God, which now shine forth in the Incarnation of his Son."

From the words thus opened, let me observe, that,

THE ABASING NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST, IS THE HIGHEST ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S GLORY.

This is a strange riddle to human reason; which is apt to judge it a most preposterous course, for God to raise his glory

out of the humiliation and abasement, yea out of the very ruins, of his Son. “What if God had thrown open the gates of heaven, and given all the world a prospect into that heavenly and glorious palace; there to have seen the throne of majesty and his glittering attendants, ten thousand flaming spirits ready to execute his will, cherubims and seraphims flying as swift as lightning within those boundless roofs; would not this have been more expressive of God’s glory, than thus to cloister it up and immure the Deity in clay? to expose Him, who was God, to the miseries of wretched man, to an ignoble and cursed death? The cratch in which he lay, and the cross on which he hung, were not high places of any glorious appearance.”

Thus may carnal reason urge, upon this score.

The Apostle, in 1 Tim. iii. 16, speaking of the incarnation of Christ, calls it *the mystery of godliness*. It is a riddle, and a mysterious one: not only how it should be, that the Eternal and Infinite God should unite himself in oneness of person with frail and despicable flesh; but why it should be done.

Now, to give you some account of this, I shall briefly, in a few particulars, shew you how much glory redounds to God hereby.

1. In the Birth of Christ, *God glorified the riches of his Infinite Wisdom*.

This was a contrivance, that would never have entered into the hearts either of men or angels. Heaven, at this very day, stands astonished at it: angels are continually looking into it, and confess their understandings infinitely too short to fathom it. 1 Cor. i. 24. Christ is called *the Wisdom of God*. He is, first, the Essential Wisdom of God, as he is the Second Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity: he is the Intellectual Word, that was in the beginning *with God*, and *was* also *God* himself. He was likewise the Declarative Wisdom of God, as Mediator; God-Man united in one person. Let us a little put the difficult case concerning Man’s salvation; that, withal, we may see whether it was not the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom. Justice and mercy lay in their different claims for sinful man: severe justice pleads the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance; and therefore challengeth the malefactors, and is ready to drag them away to execution: mercy interposes, and pleads, that, if the rigorous demands of justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and an unregarded attribute in God’s essence for ever: it alone must be excluded,

when all the rest had their share and portion. The case is infinitely difficult: call a bench of angels to debate the case: when all is said, we find no way to accommodate this difference: it is beyond their reach, how to satisfy justice in the punishment of sinners, and yet to gratify mercy in their pardon. Here now, in this gravelling case, is the wonderful wisdom of God seen: justice demands that man should die; saith God, "My Son shall become man, and die under thy hands: seize upon him, and pursue him through all the plagues and curses that my Law threatens: only, there, satisfy thyself on the Surety: my mercy shall forgive and save the principal." Think what a shout and applause heaven gave at the decision of this great controversy. Oh the infiniteness of thy wisdom, that couldst contrive means to reconcile such different interests, and twist thy glory with them both! Oh, it is delightful for reason to lose itself in such a divine meditation: for it is an unfordable deep for the soul to enter into: it utterly swallows up all our apprehensions: we never find ourselves at such a ravishing ecstasy of loss, as when we trace out the intrigues and admirable ways of our recovery.

2. The Birth of Christ *glorified the Almighty Power of God.*

It was his Infinite Power, that spread abroad the heavens, that poized the earth in the midst of the air: and it would be a glorious expression of power, if God should draw up this globe of the earth to the heavens; or if he should let down the concave of heaven to earth. This God hath done, in the miraculous Birth of Christ: he hath joined heaven and earth together: he hath made an inseparable union between them: he hath caused heaven and earth to meet in the midway: he hath raised earth to heaven, and stooped heaven to earth. It is an effect of the Almighty Power of God, to unite himself to human nature, to frail flesh: this was to put forth his power, only to make himself weak. Is it not Almighty Power, that the infinite unconceivable Godhead should unite to itself dust and ashes; and be so closely united, that it should grow into one and the same person? The glory of God's power is hereby exceedingly advanced.

3. By the Birth of Christ, *God glorified the severity of his Justice.*

His Son must rather take flesh and die, than that this attribute should remain unsatisfied. And so strict was God, that, when he found but the imputation of sin upon his Son, justice arrests

him. And, indeed, by this course the justice of God was more fully satisfied, than if it had seized upon the offenders themselves: for they are but finite, and cannot bear the utmost severity and infliction of divine wrath and vengeance: this, the Son of God can and hath done; who, by virtue of the divine nature, underwent it all, and came triumphantly from under it all. So that God glorified the attribute of his justice more, by sending Jesus Christ into the world, to undergo the execution of that wrath that was due to sinners; than if he had taken particular vengeance upon sinners, and sent away every soul of them to hell. * No other sacrifice could avail to appease the Divine Justice, but that true and only sacrifice of the Son of God, *who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.* And therefore we find it expressed, Heb. x. 5, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:* for, because the divine nature is altogether impassible, and not at all subject to grief, sorrow, or sufferings, it was therefore necessary that the Mediator between God and Man should be Man as well as God; for, by this ineffable union, the one nature suffers and the other supports, the one conflicts and the other conquers; and, for the payment of our debt, the one brings the ore, the other stamps it and makes it valuable. And, by this means, likewise, satisfaction is made unto justice in the same nature that sinned; for, as man offended, so man also is punished: the same, which made the forfeiture, makes the redemption. *For, as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead:* 1 Cor. xv. 21. the same, which was shamefully foiled, doth now most gloriously overcome: Heb. ii. 14. *Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.*

4. By the Birth of Christ, *the Truth and Veracity of God is eminently glorified*; by fulfilling many promises and predictions, which were made concerning the sending of Christ into the world.

That primitive promise, Gen. iii. that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, which lay for many ages under types and figures, at the birth of Christ broke forth into accomplishment. All those prophecies, all those ceremonial resem-

* From this sentence, inclusive, to the end of this subdivision, is added from the Appendix. EDITOR.

blances, which, through the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, went big with a Saviour, when they had gone out their full time, were safely delivered, and the veracity of God gave them all their expected issue in his birth. So we have it, Gal. iv. 4. *But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, &c.*

5 *. The Birth of Christ *glorifies the Infinite Purity and Holiness of God.*

When God formed the First Adam, he drew upon him the lineaments of his own image: and, because holiness is the most illustrious part of this image, his Almighty Creator impressed upon him that best resemblance, that he might be a visible type of his infinite purity to all the world. But, sin having despoiled mankind of that glory, the best having but some few strictures and weak glimmerings of it restored unto them in their renovation; God was pleased to raise up a Second Adam, who should be not only sinless but impeccable, and to exhibit him unto the world as the most perfect representation of his own holiness. And therefore his birth must be miraculous, that it might be pure: his extraordinary conception preserved him from original sin; and the hypostatical union, together with the unmeasurable unction of the Holy Ghost, from all actual. And, though Jesus Christ was the greatest sinner in the world (as Luther, with no bad intent, made bold to call him) by imputation; yet had he no sin, either of nature or of practice, inherent in him. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: 2 Cor. v. 21.* And *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 1 Pet. ii. 22:* and this, that he might be to us, not only an example of unspotted sanctity, but also a perfect idea of the infinite purity of God.

6 †. I might add, that, hereby, *the Infinite Love and Pity of*

* The whole of this sub-division is added from the Appendix. EDITOR.

† This head stands in the Appendix, as follows. It seems to have been used, in this form, as an Application, when the Discourse was divided at this place: part of it is again found in the Application at the end of the whole Discourse.

“ 6. The Birth of Jesus Christ most eminently glorifies *the infinite Love and Mercy of God towards sinners.*

“ So very dear were our souls to God, that, when he saw us lie forlorn in our sin and misery, forfeited to his justice, exposed to his curses, and liable to his eternal wrath, he was pleased to commiserate our wretched condition, and to send *his only-begotten Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem us who were under the curse and malediction of the Law.* O miracle of love and mercy! that God should send his Son out of his

God are eminently glorified : but, this falling into another part of my text, *God's good-will towards men*, I shall make a transition thither ; and shall leave this consideration, of the glory which

bosom, to lay sinners in it ! that he should abase him, to exalt us ! make him the Son of Man, that we should be made the Sons of God ! Well might our Saviour himself speak admiringly of this infinite love, John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

“ This is that unspeakable love, which we this day celebrate. And, certainly, if the holy angels, who are not so immediately concerned in the Birth of a Saviour, of a Redeemer, yet exult in the glorious Day of his Nativity ; shall not our hearts be distended with a rapturous joy, since all our hopes and happiness are wholly founded in the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord ? Shall heaven rejoice, when it stoops ; and earth not rejoice, when it is exalted ? Shall the blessed spirits above be more concerned, out of charity ; than we ourselves are, out of interest ? This is a stupidity unworthy of a Christian. This either proceeds from a wretched contempt of the inestimable benefits, which Christ hath procured us by his coming into the world ; or from a guilty consciousness, that we shall have no share in them. For shame, therefore, let us with raised hearts and voices this day echo back unto the celestial quire, *Glory to God in the highest.*

“ Only let us beware, that we do not dishonour God, while we pretend to glorify him. It is very sad to consider, that, as Christ's Birth hath been the cause of the salvation of many a soul, so Christmas hath been the occasion of the damnation of many. The rude and ignorant look upon it only as a time of mirth and looseness ; and, when they have gotten liberty from the honest labour and works of their callings, employ it only in the works of the Devil. Suffer me to speak plainly : what through rioting, and drunkenness, and revelling, and gaming, and such like excesses, the name of Christ hath been greatly dishonoured, under a pretence of honouring his birth. What, Sirs, do you believe that Christ came into the world to give you a fair occasion to eat to gluttony, to drink to drunkenness, to swear up all hell ? are not these some of the sins, which he came into the world to destroy ? And will you make him the patron of your wickedness, who came on purpose to redeem you from it ? This is to entertain hell, and keep a feast to the Devil ; and, as those infernal spirits howled at the Birth of our Saviour, so to make them rejoice and triumph at the annual return of it. I have somewhere * met with a story of a Turkish Ambassador, who was sent to one of the greatest courts in Christendom : when he returned home to his master, and was by him examined what customs the Christians observed, he made this answer, That for twelve days in the year all the Christians ran mad. His observation was but too true, and too much to the utter disparagement of Christian Religion ; and that general profaneness, which usually rages and abounds at this season, may make it questionable, whether there be not more wickedness committed in those Twelve Days, than in all the Twelve Months after. I beseech you, therefore, that you would not, to the shame of your religion and your reason, indulge a mad loose joy : rejoice not so, as to make the Devil glad too. But let your joy be spiritual and heavenly ; a joy, not of noise and laughter ; but of praise and

* Busbequ. Ep. iii. p. 168.

God acquires to himself by the Incarnation of his Son Christ, under these particulars *.

blessings : a joy, that may diffuse a calm and serene cheerfulness through your souls : and let it be full of innocency, and full of peace. Thus, let us give *glory to God in the Highest* : glory to the Son, who descended from the highest : glory to the Holy Ghost, who gives us hopes of ascending to the highest : glory to the holy, blessed, and undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : and let us all, from the very bottom of our hearts, say, Amen, Amen." EDITOR.

* In the Third Octavo and the Folio, it is added here, " And so I shall proceed to the Infinite Love and Good-Will, that God hath shewn towards men : " the second division, of *Peace on Earth*, being, in these editions, entirely omitted. I have supplied the whole of this head from the Appendix : and it seems to have been preached as a separate Discourse, with an appropriate Application, and with the following Introduction ; which Introduction will be found to be an amplification of that placed at the beginning of the Discourse as above printed, with an allusion to a former Sermon.

" All the circumstances of Christ's birth, are well worthy our most serious consideration.

" A decree issues out from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world (that is, all the Roman world ; those many kingdoms and provinces, which arms and continued successes had made subject to him, who was the lord and emperor of the greatest part of the then known world) should undergo a tax. This tax in Judæa was not to be levied upon them from house to house, as they lived dispersedly asunder ; but each family, how remote soever their abode might be, was bound to repair to that city, to which, according to their genealogical tables, their ancestors did appertain.

" In obedience to this command, Joseph prepares himself to undergo this double burden, of the payment and of the journey : and, because he was descended of the royal lineage of David, though now grown poor and fallen to decay, he travels with Mary, his espoused wife, to Bethlehem ; the city whence the progenitors of them both had their rise and original ; Joseph descending from David by Solomon, and Mary by Nathan.

" Mary's appointed hour draws nigh, to undergo a far more sorrowful and dolorous travail : her blessed burden had now been kept its full time, both in her womb, and in the womb of the promise ; and when this *fulness of time was come*, that the truth and veracity of God might be safely delivered of its charge, as well as Mary, Providence wonderfully conspires with prophecy, and makes use of either the necessities or avarice of the Roman emperor, to summon them to Bethlehem ; that so those predictions might be punctually fulfilled, which foretold that Christ the Saviour should be born there.

" The great confluence of people from the adjacent country had already filled all the inns : no harbour, no reception, could be gotten for such mean and vulgar persons as they were ; and, though she appears in a condition that is wont to command pity and respect from the most barbarous and uncivil natures, yet, when they are crowded with so many gainful guests, none are found to compassionate that distress, which is unhappily joined with and increased by poverty. A stable is the best room they can obtain ; and this thought good enough too for the wife of a carpenter : nor, in likelihood, was this left so free to them neither, but that, *Bos et asinus ad præsepe*

ii. The Second Part of this Angelical Song, is PEACE ON EARTH.

This *Peace* may be understood Three ways :

First. Either peace mutually between man and man : that, at the coming of Christ, men should be at peace with one another.

Or,

Secondly. Peace internally, with a man's self : peace in the region of his own spirit and conscience.

alligati sunt : Vid. Baron. Annal. init. brute beasts must be their inmates, and their brutish keepers their companions. There, she is forced to lay her sacred burden, amidst the disorders and impurities of the place : where there could be neither modest assistance, nor tolerable convenience ; but rudeness, noise, and confusion.

“ It might seem strange, that God should, so many ages beforehand, appoint Bethlehem to be the place of his Eternal Son's birth : Bethlehem, that would afford him no better accommodation, than a stable for his chamber, and a manger for his cradle ! that he should entrust such a precious *depositum* to persons so devoid of charity and humanity ! Yet so it is ordained, that his whole life, from first to last, might be infinitely full of debasements and dishonours ; that he might breathe his first under the uncharitableness of men, as his last under their cruelty.

“ But, though he be so badly welcomed on earth, yet Heaven makes abundant amends for all. A company of honest, industrious shepherds are watching their flocks by night ; and little thought of any such thing, as that to them should be revealed the Shepherd of Israel. A heavenly light surrounds them, and sheds glory and lustre about the place. An angel accosts them, and tells them tidings of great joy, that that day was born to them a *Saviour*, even *Christ the Lord* ; and bids them leave their flocks, and go seek their own pastor. Upon this message, as if all heaven kept festival, the text tells us, that an innumerable multitude of the heavenly host praised God, *saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men.*

In these words is contained whatsoever is delightful both to God and man : what Jotham, in his parable, speaks of the vine, Judges ix. 13. is certainly true of this text : *It cheereth God and man.* God knoweth no higher design than his own glory ; and Christ's coming into the world most illustriously promotes and displays it. Man can desire no greater happiness than what follows, *Peace and Good-will* : and both these were born into the world, together with Christ. All sinners stand in a double state of distance from God : the one, of opposition and defiance ; the other, of alienation and estrangement : *Peace* removes the one, and *Good-will* the other : and, in the text, God, by his angel, proclaims both to the world : *Peace*, to reconcile them ; and *good-will*, to endear them ; and both in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“ I have at another place, the last anniversary, shewed the reasons why the angels should so much concern themselves in the Birth of our Saviour, as to rejoice at so signal abasement of the Great God whom they adore and serve. I likewise then spake of the First Part of this Angelical Song, and shewed how God's glory is eminently advanced by the Incarnation of his Son. It remains now to insist upon the Second Part of it, which is, *Peace on Earth.*” EDITOR.

Or,

Thirdly. Peace with God: that his Sovereign Majesty, whom we have affronted and offended by our sins, is now at peace with us and reconciled to us.

In each of these three senses, may this Peace be understood, which these heavenly heralds proclaim; external, internal, and eternal peace: *Peace on earth*; i. e. peace to the inhabitants of the earth; peace with one another, peace in themselves, and peace with God: and all these procured and promoted by the Birth of Christ.

For Christ was sent into the world under a twofold *σχεσις*, or habitude:

As a Minister.

As a Mediator.

As he is a Minister of Peace, so he promotes it between men: and, as he is the Mediator of Peace, so he procures it between God and men: and, as he is both a Minister and a Mediator, so he effects it between man and himself, and fills the soul with joy and peace in believing.

It is the First of these, that I intend to treat of: and which, indeed, I judge to be most especially meant in the text; for the two latter, viz. Peace with God and Peace in our own Consciences, seem to appertain to the last clause of this heavenly anthem: the one being the same with God's good-will towards us; the other being its effect and consequent, upon the comfortable sense of it in our own breasts.

Christ's coming into the world, therefore, tends to the promoting of peace in it between man and man.

We find, in the records of history, that, about the time of our Saviour's Birth, Janus's temple was shut up, and that there was an universal peace throughout the world. And Florus, speaking of those times, relates, that *Continua totius humani generis, aut pax erat, aut pactio*: that "There was either a peace, or truce, among all mankind." And, indeed, it was but fit that wars should cease, when the Prince of Peace was born. The divine wisdom so disposed of human affairs, that he, who was not to strive, nor *cry....nor cause his voice to be heard in the street*, should then come into the world, when it was serene, and enjoyed halcyon days; when there were no strifes, nor wars, nor confused noises, nor garments rolled in blood.

The very name of *Peace* is sweet and lovely: it is the calm of the world, the smile of nature, the harmony of things, a

gentle and melodious air struck from well-tuned affairs; a blessing, so excellent and amiable, that in this world there is but one preferable before it, and that is, Holiness. And, certainly, great *glory* doth *dwell* in that *land*, where these two sister-blessings, *righteousness and peace*, do meet and kiss *each other*, as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10. I know, that there are hot and turbulent spirits enough abroad, who are apt to suspect whatsoever is spoken on the behalf of peace, to be to the disadvantage of holiness: and, perhaps, some men's zeal may be such a touchy and froward thing, that, though an angel from heaven, yea an innumerable multitude of them, proclaim it; yet they cannot believe there may be *glory to God in the highest*, whilst there is *peace on earth*.

Indeed, if peace and sanctity were incompatible, or if any unhappy circumstances should compel us to redeem the one at the price of the other; we ought rather to follow righteousness through thorns and briars, than peace in its smoothest way strewn with roses. But there is no such inconsistency between them: for, certainly, that God, who hath commanded us to follow both peace and holiness, Heb. xii. 14, supposeth that they themselves may well go together. We may well suspect that zeal to be but an unclean bird of prey, that delights to quarry upon the dove; and those erratic lights, which make the vulgar gaze and the wise fear, to be but glaring comets, whose bloody aspects and excentric irregular motions threaten nothing but wars, ruin, and desolations. Righteousness doth not oblige us, so soon as any thing is passed contrary to our present judgments and persuasions, nay suppose it be contrary to the truth also, straight to furbish our weapons, to sound an alarm, and to kill others in defence of that cause for which we ourselves rather ought to die. This is not to part with peace for righteousness; but to sacrifice both peace and righteousness, to injustice and violence. The cause of God, of piety and religion, may frequently engage us to forego our own peace, as sufferers and martyrs; but never to disturb the public peace of our country, as fighters and warriors.

Now this public and civil peace is mightily promoted, by Christ's coming into the world as a Minister: for, since the work and office of a minister is to teach both by doctrine and example, Christ hath both ways, as a perfect Minister of Peace, taught us to *follow peace with all men*.

For,

1. All *the Precepts of his Doctrine* do directly tend to the establishing of peace among men.

There are but Two things, which can be supposed to violate peace:

Doing of wrong unto others.

Revenging of wrongs done unto us, by others.

And both these, the doctrine of Christ doth strictly prohibit.

(1) Christianity teacheth us, not to offer any injury unto others.

It obligeth us to the strictest rules of justice and equity; and, whatsoever is not correspondent with the most rigid observation of these, it utterly forbids and condemns. Our Saviour hath fixed and sealed the great standard of all natural righteousness: Mat. vii. 12. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*; and frequently presseth that brief summary of the Second Table, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: certainly, there can no place be left for wrongs and injustice, where our love to ourselves is made the measure of our love to others, and the care of our own welfare the very model and pattern of our care for theirs. Neither doth Christianity restrain only the outward violent acts of injustice and rapine; but it looks inward, and lays a law upon our very thoughts and desires: it forbids us to think or judge hardly of another, to despise him in our hearts, or to be angry with our brother without a cause: so wonderfully accurate is the doctrine of Christ in this particular, that it not only prohibits us to wrong them really in their persons, but we must not so much as wrong the very shadow and idea of them in our minds: and, as well those, who nourish any secret grudge against them in their hearts, or seek by any clandestine artifices to undermine their credit and repute, as those, who are more openly and tumultuously injurious, break this peace, which the angels here proclaim, and which our Saviour himself came to preach to the world.

(2) The doctrine of Christ forbids all private revenge, and retaliating of wrongs and injuries done unto us.

For, indeed, there is no other difference between him that doth a wrong, and him that requites it, but only that the one is a little sooner wicked than the other. This our Saviour frequently insists on; as that, which is the very genius of the Gospel, and the very spirit which it breathes: Mat. v. 38, 39. *Ye have heard*

that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. These and the following precepts must not, indeed, be understood literally ; as that scoffing apostate Julian impiously derided them, who, when he had commanded some Christians to be buffeted, asked them, in scorn, why they did not turn the other cheek also : for neither our Saviour himself, nor St. Paul, invited the injuries that were done them, but rather sharply reprov'd those who unjustly smote them. But the meaning is, that we ought patiently to bear the wrongs which are done us ; and to be willing, rather to suffer a second injury, than to revenge the first. Yea, v. 44. our Saviour raiseth his doctrine a strain higher ; and not only forbids us to requite wrongs with wrongs, but commands us to requite injuries with courtesy : *I say unto you, Love your enemies : bless them, that curse you : do good to them, that hate you : and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* And St. Paul, who most exactly follows both our Saviour's doctrine and example, urgeth the very same, Rom. xii. 20. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him : if he thirst, give him drink.* This is all the revenge, which the Gospel permits : this is that excellent doctrine, which our Saviour came to preach : this is that doctrine, which he hath given us commission to declare and publish to the world, to guide our feet into the way of peace ; that we might all be united, as by faith and obedience unto God, so in love and charity one to another. But, alas ! may we not justly complain, that this excellent temper is rarely to be found among Christians, in these our days ? would they not be ready to wonder at it, as some strange and unheard-of doctrine, if we should expostulate with them, as the Apostle doth, 1 Cor. vi. 7 ? *Why do ye not rather take wrong ? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ?* is it ever likely we should prevail with those, who are apt to do wrong and defraud others, to be content quietly to pass by the wrongs and injuries that others do them ? will they part with their own right, who are so ready to invade the rights of others ? And, yet, if this hard lesson be not learnt by us, we frustrate one great and special end of Christ's coming into the world : he came to be a Minister of Peace ; and hath taught us neither to do wrong, nor to retaliate it : the first were sufficient to establish a general peace, were it but generally observed ; but, in case others will

break the peace and be injurious to us, Christ hath strictly enjoined us the observation of the latter, that, though we cannot be quiet, yet we may be innocent.

Thus you see how the Doctrine of Christ tends to promote peace.

2. *The Examples of Christ* all tend unto peace.

His whole life was the very pattern of meekness and gentleness. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;* but, with infinite patience, bears the indignation of God and the indignities of men. Yea, we find him very careful of giving any offence, both in matters civil and ecclesiastical: when tribute was demanded of him, though he pleads his right to be exempted, as being a descendent of the royal line; yet, Mat. xvii. 27. *Lest we should offend them, &c.* what! the Great God so cautious of giving offence to vile creatures, whom he was able to speak, to look into nothing! yea, he would rather work a miracle, than occasion an offence; and make the sea pay tribute to him, rather than he not pay tribute to the state: *Lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.* Yea, and we find, likewise, that he accommodated himself to the received custom of the Jewish Church; and that, in a matter wherein there was the greatest appearance of reason that could be, to have dissented: he sits at the passover with his disciples; although it be plain that the first institution of it was to eat it standing, with shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands: none of which rites our Saviour observed; but defers so much to the authority and custom of the Church, and that a very corrupt one too, that he would not differ from them in a matter that was merely circumstantial, though they themselves differed from the primitive institution. Certainly, if so much could be objected against the rites and orders of our Church, as might have been objected against this custom of the Jewish Church, those, who now raise such great tragedies out of little matters, might, I will not say with more confidence and clamour, but doubtless with more shew of reason, decry them as human inventions, sinful impositions, unwarranted innovations, and contrary to the word of God: and yet our Blessed Saviour, in a peaceable condescension, conforms himself to the practice of the Church in which he lived; and, because the Romans' manner of discumbency or

sitting was then the received custom among them, he likewise sits with his disciples. And, therefore, let me only, by the way, note to you, that this sitting of our Saviour at his supper is most imprudently and unwarily urged against our kneeling: for their argument may be forcibly retorted against them, that, because Christ sat at his supper, therefore we ought to kneel: for, since there was so much to be said for standing at the passover, out of the express Word of God and the primitive institution, and yet our Saviour, out of compliance to the usage of the Church, chose rather to sit; how much more ought we, who have nothing left to determine the gesture, to conform ourselves to the usage of the Church in which we live, and whose members we are! for this is to conform ourselves, not indeed to the gesture, for so neither do our opposers themselves; but to the intent and design of Christ, which was peace and unity.

And thus you see how Christ was sent into the world to be a Minister of Peace; to preach it in his Doctrine, and to commend it to us by his Practice and Example. The Gospel is the Gospel of Peace: the precepts of it are all meek and peaceable: the ministers of it are ambassadors of peace: and the fruits of it, where it hath its due effect, are joy and peace.

But, here, it may be objected, “How is it then that our Saviour himself tells us, Mat. x. 34, 35. *Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law?* and one would think this is far enough from turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.’ And do we not find it, by obvious experience, that religion hath sowed more strifes and dissensions, and occasioned more tumults and uproars in the world, than ever tyranny or ambition did?”

To this I answer, We must distinguish, between the direct end of Christ’s coming into the world, and the accidental issue and event of it. The end of Christ’s coming, was to pacify the world; and to teach it a religion, which is pure and peaceable: but, accidentally, the event hath proved quite contrary; for,

religion being avowedly the dearest and most precious of all our enjoyments, men are apt to preserve it by undue and violent courses; and, because we can never think it secure enough, unless others embrace it too, we are generally very ready to impose our own sentiments upon them, and to judge that we do them no wrong whilst by any means we constrain them to what, in our own opinion, is most excellent, and the only truth which all ought to profess. And therefore those, who were zealous for their heathenish superstition and idolatry, embroiled the whole world in persecutions and blood, to suppress the growing doctrine of Christianity: and, among those, who profess Christianity itself, what heats and animosities, what endless controversies and perpetual contentions, are agitated! each sect and party blowing up the coals, till they have put both Church and State into a combustion; and differences about small and trival matters too often breaking forth into all the extremities of rage, war, and bloodshed. Yet this is not to be imputed to the religion of Christ, but to the pride and ignorance of men: their ignorance, in that they know not the truth; or their pride, in that they will not submit unto it.

The Gospel is free from all that blood, which hath been rashly and unwarrantably shed in quarrels about it. It teacheth us the way of peace perfectly; and, would all men be persuaded to submit their passions and their interests to its precepts, we might soon beat our *swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks*; for the whole spirit of the Gospel breathes nothing else but love and obedience, condescension and yielding: love, to one another; obedience, to our superiors; condescension and yielding, either to the malice of our enemies, or to the weakness of our brethren.

But, alas! pride, and passion, and self-interest, and a stiff adherence to former apprehensions have, now-a-days, eaten out the meekness and patience of a Christian spirit. Each values himself by the boldness of his opposition. He, who can find most faults, and most bitterly inveigh against them, is the best man; and, whosoever hath but wit enough to make a quick and confident reply, begins now to think of setting up for himself to head a party, and control all orders both civil and sacred: and I wish they may never again attempt to write themselves Saints in the Rubric of their brethren's blood.

And yet, I pray, consider: what are all our dissensions about?

Did we differ in any fundamental points either of faith or practice, we were then indeed to contend earnestly for them, and to resist unto blood; yet not the blood of others, but our own. But, when mere modes and circumstances, things altogether in themselves extraneous to religion, and by all parties acknowledged not to be necessary nor essential to it, shall yet be so eagerly contested, as if the whole weight of religion and the eternal salvation or damnation of men's souls turned upon those hinges, to the violation of charity, peace, and order; what can we think, but that God may be justly provoked to try whether we will be as zealous about the necessary and vital principles of religion, as we are hot and fiery about small indifferences and unconcerning circumstances? For my part, I shall always think that the power and savour of the Gospel hath taken most hold on those, who are willing, for the preservation of such an inestimable blessing as peace, to comply with any thing and to do any thing but sin. So long as the doctrine of faith which we preach, the duties of obedience which we press, the ordinances of Jesus Christ which we administer, are the very same; since we profess the same Lord, the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same God and Father of all, what should hinder our coalition and union together in the bond of peace? What! shall we rend the coat of Christ in pieces, only because there are some loops and fringes sewed to it? shall we separate from communion, and crumble ourselves into endless fractions; perpetuate irreconcilable divisions and animosities, and run ourselves into that which is clearly sinful; to avoid what, at worst, is but dubitable? If any can as evidently prove out of the Word of God, that those debated forms and modes are sins; as it can be certainly proved out of the Word of God, that, to join in church fellowship and the communion of holy ordinances, to preserve the peace and unity of the Church, and to yield obedience to things required which are not in themselves unlawful, are duties, in comparison with which weighty matters of the law, all disputes about forms and circumstances are but mere trifles: I shall then yield; and confess, that they ought not to purchase peace, how desirable a blessing soever it be, at the loss of truth or the price of a sin. But, till this be done, if any can dispense with the express doctrine and command of Christ, of preserving peace and unity, and joining in all his public ordinances, rather than submit to those things which can never be evinced to be contrary to the command of Christ; yea,

and which those, who most of all dissent, cannot but judge to be disputable: I must needs say, that such an one strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel; for conscience of a circumstance, neglects the substance; and, for fear of that which is but doubtful, doth that which is undoubtedly sinful.

Let me then, by the bowels of Christ, persuade you all to mind the same things, and to walk in the same way: and, since we are agreed in all fundamentals of faith and in all the substantials of worship, let not other things, on which no more stress is laid than that of decency and order, be pretended as an obstacle to a happy closure. But, if men will stumble at shadows, let them beware that they do not provoke God to take the substance of our religion quite from us, while we are so quarrelsome about the shape of it; and lest, while we strive to dress it up, each after his own garb and fashion, we lose not the body itself. Since we will needs be disputing, and opposing, and contradicting, though it be about a matter of nothing, may we not justly fear, that God will find out a full task and employment for our busy spirits, and put us upon the sad necessity of striving and contending about the very essentials of religion, and call us to shed our blood and lay down our lives for them? If ever such a time of trial should come upon us, which we have but too much cause to fear that God will hasten, because of our wanton dissensions; we shall then learn, to our costs, to put a difference between substantials and circumstantials, and shall look back with grief and shame upon our unreasonable and uncharitable divisions: yea, and then should we be heartily glad, could we but enjoy the liberty of the Gospel and the ordinances of our Lord Christ, under any form of administration now so hotly and furiously controverted amongst us. Certainly, the stake will reconcile us all: we shall there embrace, and not cry out of superstition and will-worship, and I know not what: the fire of martyrdom will purify all our intemperate heats; and, as our bodies, so our hearts, shall flame together in love and union, and together shall we ascend in that fiery chariot to the same heaven: for, when the sheep scatter and separate; and, though their appointed pastures be fair and flourishing, will yet, out of wantonness, rather than necessity, stray into others; the Great Shepherd may justly send in those dogs or wolves to worry them, which will quickly make them run together again.

Since, then, the angels from heaven have proclaimed peace on earth; since the Lord of angels, Jesus Christ himself, came

down from heaven to establish and promote peace on earth; beware that none of you, upon pretence of celebrating this great and joyful day, be guilty of violating either peace with men or peace with God. And, yet, what more common and ordinary, than now, in the time of this great joy, when the angels proclaim peace from heaven; what more common, than for many, by rioting, and drunkenness, and revelling, and quarrels, to proclaim war against one another, against God, against Christ, against piety, religion, temperance, and all that is sacred and venerable! Certainly, Christ came not into the world to patronize men's debaucheries; or to give you a fair occasion to be guilty of gluttony and drunkenness, to revile, reproach, and quarrel with one another: no; these are some of the sins, which he came to destroy; and, if you will indulge yourselves in these abominations, I cannot proclaim Peace or Good-Will to you, but war and wrath from the Almighty and Jealous God.

iii. I shall proceed to the INFINITE LOVE AND GOOD-WILL, that God hath shewn towards men.

Now I am entering upon a theme, enough to puzzle and nonplus, not only our expressions, but our apprehensions too; not only our apprehensions, but even our admiration itself. But, O Lord! we can neither keep silence, nor speak out thy love: it is so great and so infinite, that it arrests our thoughts, and cramps our tongues, and leaves us no relief, but that expression of the Apostle; *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, &c.* Rom. xi. 33. Oh, the boundless dimensions of the love of God, which passeth knowledge! If the angels, who sang this song, *Peace on earth, good-will towards men*, should themselves be questioned, how great good-will; even they must falter and stammer in it: they are continually prying into it; and there is infinitely more in it than they have seen, and yet they see infinitely more than they can relate.

And what do we here, then, this day? What is it, that I attempt, or you expect? Haste home, therefore, O Christians: yield up yourselves to be swallowed up with the thoughts and meditations of that, which we cannot comprehend.

And, that I may give you some hints for your meditations to fix on, I shall endeavour to illustrate the great and infinite Love

of God in sending Christ into the world, from these considerations: From

The Person, that was sent.

The Manner and Circumstances of this sending.

The Persons, to whom he was sent.

The unspeakable Benefits, that do redound to men, by this free gift of God.

In all these, God's good-will towards men is admirably glorious, as I shall demonstrate to you.

1. If you consider *the Person sent*, this will exalt the goodness of God towards us.

And who is it? Is he an Angel? truly, if he were, herein divine love doth infinitely advance itself, that God should spare one of his own retinue from his attendance on him, to give such a glorious servant as an angel is, for the redemption of such a rebellious worm as man! But who is not astonished? it was not an angel, but the Lord of Angels: not a servant, but a Son, is by the Father himself plucked from his own bosom, and sent with this message: "Haste, haste to the earth, for there are thousands of sinful and wretched creatures, sinning themselves to hell; and must for ever fall under the strokes of my dreadful justice: step thou between them and it: receive thou my wrath thyself: do thou satisfy my justice; and die thou thyself, to save them." When God tried Abraham's obedience, he aggravated his command by many piercing words, that must needs go to the heart of a tender father: Gen. xxii. 2. *Take now thy son, thine only son....whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him up there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will shew thee, &c:* this heightened Abraham's obedience, that, notwithstanding all these aggravations, yet he was willing to sacrifice his beloved son upon God's command. Truly, in the very same manner, God heightens and illustrates his own love towards us: he takes his Son, his only Son, the Son of his Eternal Love and Delights, and offers him up as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

And this greatly extols the love of God, that,

(1) He lay under no necessity of saving us at all.

As nothing accrues unto him by our happiness, so nothing would have been diminished from * his Essential Glory by our

* Hence to the end of this head is added from the Appendix. EDITOR.

eternal misery. For, as God created men and angels, not that we might supply his indigence but partake of his fullness; so he redeems us and preserves them, not that he might reap our services, but that we might enjoy his mercies. What saith Eliphaz, Job xxii. 2, 3? *Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?* and if we cannot profit God by serving him, much less certainly by receiving rewards for it. We can contribute nothing to his essential happiness; for God is for ever blessed in the contemplation and enjoyment of his infinite perfections. It was not to ease the solitude and tediousness of eternity, that therefore God created the world: for all the delight, which he takes in any of his creatures, is only as he views his own perfections in them; which being eternally in himself before the world was, he then possessed the same felicity as now, without receiving any addition or variation from any thing that he hath made. As it is no advantage to the sun, that so many eyes behold its light; but it would still be as bright and glorious in itself, although no creature were capable of receiving its rays: so is God infinitely glorious and blessed, in the excellencies of his eternal being and attributes; and would have been so for ever, although he had never formed any creature to observe and adore the brightness of his perfections. And, if God gain nothing by creating us, then certainly neither doth he gain by saving us: all the tribute, that either angels or glorified saints pay unto him, is but love and praise; and these cannot suppose the person who receives them to be benefited, but to be beneficial: it is true, Christ was sent to seek and to save those that were lost, Mat. xviii. 11; but, if this gracious design had never been laid and all mankind had perished for ever, the loss had been only to themselves, not to God; whose justice would then have had that whole glory, which is now divided between his justice and his mercy. If, therefore, it be commendation of love to be wholly disinterested, nothing can more gloriously advance the love of God, than that he should give his Own Son for the redemption of such inconsiderable creatures, whose hatred and rebellions are but despicable, and their service and obedience unprofitable.

(2) But, as some affirm, God lay under no necessity of saving us in so chargeable a manner, by the death of his Son, but that he might have freed us from death by the absolute prero-

gative of his pardoning grace and mercy, without shedding the blood of Christ.

And do you think, that in heaven, we should ever have complained for want of love in God to us, though he had brought us thither at a cheaper rate than now he doth? But this, though it might have been sufficient for our salvation, yet was it not sufficient for God's design, in the manifestation of the riches and glory of his great love to us: and, therefore, God will not go the most saving way to work, in compassing our salvation; but that way, which shall be most for the enhancing of his love to us. Is it not greater love in God towards us to part with Christ out of heaven, to break and bruise him, to make his soul an offering for sin and his blood a ransom for sinners; than if he had only, without any further circumstances, beckoned us up to heaven? This, therefore, must be the method, which Divine Wisdom will take, because Divine Love dictates it to be the most advantageous to commend his love to sinners. Oh, the supererogating mercy of God, that is not only contented to do what is barely sufficient for our salvation; but, over and above, adds what may be most expressive of his own love and affections to us! John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, &c.* God so loved the world: how? what, so as to save it only? no; but he so loved it, as he gave his only-begotten Son to save it. What, thy Son, Lord, thine Only Son! Why, the destruction of the whole world is not a thing so considerable, as one sigh, one groan, one tear, or one drop of blood from that Only Son of thine, whom thou gavest to save the world! But, however, God is resolved notwithstanding, that not only a sigh, groan, or tear; but the life of his Son also shall go, rather as a manifestation of his love to sinners, than for any absolute antecedent necessity of such a sacrifice. And that is one thing, wherein this love and good-will of God to men appears, in that he gave them his Only Son, out of his own bosom, for their salvation.

2. Consider *the manner and circumstances of Christ's coming into the world*; and then also it will appear further, that there is in God an infinite love and good-will towards men.

And, here, I shall treat of these Two things:

That Christ was sent, as from the Father, freely.

And, as to Himself, ignominiously.

And both these do contribute much to the exalting of the Infinite Love of God towards fallen man.

(1) God's love is exalted, in that he sent his Only Son freely.

If men and devils had joined their forces, and made an assault upon heaven; yet they could never have plucked the Son of God's love from his eternal embraces: that world, which he had given to Christ, which afterwards had power to assault, kill, and crucify him; yet, before he was given, had no power to bring him into the world. But God thinks it not enough, that this great gift comes from him freely and without compulsion: but he puts it a strain higher; and he gives Christ freely to us:

[1] Freely, in opposition to all Desert; not only without, but against all merit and desert in us.

Certainly, man could no more merit Christ out of heaven, than he could have merited heaven without Christ: when God, out of his infinite wisdom, foresaw that we would despise and reject his Son, first spill his blood and then trample upon it; did he so hate his Son, as to account this demeanour of ours meritorious of him? since we cannot merit the least good, how then could we merit so great a gift as Christ? Nay, which is more to the glory of God's free good-will, he bestowed Christ upon us, not only without any merit of ours, but without any merit of his also: it is free grace that endows us with any spiritual, with any eternal blessing: free grace doth sanctify our hearts and save our souls: yet all this Christ hath purchased for us, by the price of his own death: he is the merit of eternal salvation for us; yet it is free grace in bestowing it upon us: God will have a price paid him down for all other things of less value, that he may thereby set forth his own bounty, in parting with the greatest gift, his Own Son, without price: Christ merited all other things for us; but the greatest of all he never merited for us, that is, himself: God hath put heaven, and glory, and the everlasting enjoyment of himself upon sale, as it were; that so this great gift of his Son may appear truly estimable, and his bounty absolute and infinite: but though he gives all things besides Christ, upon the account of Christ's merits; yet he gives Christ freely, without any intervening merit.

[2] God's love is free in the gift of Christ, in that he prevents not only our deserts, but our Desires.

Begging of alms takes not off from the charity and bounty of the donor; yet God is not willing to have his bounty so much forestalled, as our requesting of it. As for the good things of grace and glory, the most importunate suiters are usually the best speeders: *Ask, and ye shall receive: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened.* But in the giving of Christ to the

world, he was *found of them that sought him not*. And, in all this, was the design of love laid in the heart of God, from all eternity, before ever there were either prayers or tongues to utter them. This was a design of infinite contrivance, the possibility of which it could never enter into our hearts, or the hearts of angels to conceive; and what we could not conceive in our thoughts and hearts, we could not beg with our mouths: but God, out of his own good-will to us, prevents both our works and our words, both the merit of our hands and the requests of our mouths; and freely bestows his Own Son to be our Saviour, without either our deserving or desiring of him.

(2) As Christ was given freely, in respect of God; so very ignominiously, in respect of himself.

And this enhanceth the exceeding greatness of the love of God towards us: he was degraded in his birth, persecuted in his life, and accursed in his death. And, that he should thus deal with the Son of his Love, that he should abase and afflict him only to shew his love to us, seems, at the first blush, to intimate, that God preferred such worms as we are, before the Son of his Bosom.

And, here, let us,

[1] Consider Christ, in his Birth.

And, here, what was it to be born of the royal line and stock of David? that family was now fallen to decay, when the heir-apparent of that royal family, was Joseph, who was forced for the sustaining of his life to turn mechanic: yet this family he chooseth to be a member of, not when it was victorious and triumphant, but when it was sunk low, and did expire. He also chooseth out a mean, poor virgin, to become his mother: she is thought but a fit match for a carpenter; and when she is grown big with him too, that is not without some suspicion; and when she was in travail, none did so much regard the entreaties of Joseph, nor the groans and pangs of Mary, as to afford her a better room than a stable; where she herself was both mother and nurse, and, instead of a cradle, rocked Christ in a manger; and, though her heart yearned, yet she had no softer pillow to lay under him, than straw or hay. Nor,

[2] Doth his Life repair the meanness of his birth.

No; he is *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, from first to last. He becomes subject to his parents: he puts himself under the dominion of his own creatures: he follows his father's occupation; Mark vi. 3. *Is not this the carpenter?* as in scorn

they said: He, that formed the heavens and the earth, learns himself to make houses! There was nothing of outward pomp or grandeur in his life: Isa. liii. 2. *He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*, saith the Prophet. He was maintained by the alms of a few poor, well-disposed women; tempted by the Devil, persecuted by the Jews, betrayed by his own followers. This was the course of his life. And,

[3] If you consider his Death, that was shameful, bloody, and accursed.

We see him on the cross, hanging on the soreness of his hands and feet: we see him pierced to the heart by a ruffian soldier: we see him crowned with thorns; and the precious blood trickling from the head, to meet those other rivers that were running from his side and feet: we see him forsaken of his disciples; and, what is more, we hear him complaining of being forsaken of God too. O Blessed Saviour! what eyes can refrain from weeping? what heart from bleeding? Is this the entertainment that the world gives to thee, the dearest pledge that God hath or can send? Is this thy welcome to it? Is this thy departure out of it? Shall we mock and scourge, crucify, pierce, and murder thee? And wilt thou by all these outrages committed against thyself, accomplish our salvation? O victorious love! that can pardon when abused, and exalt us by being abased, and glorify us by being despised! Yet God will have it so, that his goodwill may be commended by the affronts and by the indignities, which peevish mankind puts upon it.

3. The infinite good-will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world, appears to be glorious and great, if you consider *the Persons to whom he was sent*.

The fallen angels stood in as much need of a Saviour, as we; and Christ was as well able to save them, as to save us; and they would have served God with more enlarged capacities, than we can possibly do: but, as soon as those glorious spirits sinned, God threw them down to hell; where they are shackled up in chains of massy darkness for ever, never to have any release. O most dreadful severity towards them! O unspeakable love towards us! God passeth by the angels; and recovereth vile mankind, and raiseth them up out of the dust, that they might fill up those void places of the angels, that left their first station. This is that, which makes the Devil rage; and this is that, which makes that Old Serpent to gnaw his tongue with

anguish : that he should be cast down from heaven like lightning, and such vile worms as men are advanced to his place and honour. Truly, nothing puts a greater accent upon love, than when it is laid out upon those who are most unworthy, with a purpose thereby to make them worthy.

Thus is the love of God, in sending Christ, expressed : he comes and finds us unworthy ; and he comes, that he might make us worthy. Now, here,

(1) Consider : This love is pitched upon Loathsome and Deformed Creatures, that so it might make them comely and beautiful. And this advanceth the free love of God, in sending Christ into the world.

You may see an elegant comparison of man in the state of nature, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. where the Prophet compares him to a poor forsaken infant, swathed in his own blood, cast into the open field, helpless for its weakness, and loathsome for its deformity. This is the very emblem of that condition, in which we ourselves are, in our natural and unregenerate state : we are cast out to the loathing of our persons ; and impotent, that we cannot help ourselves. Whose bowels would not yearn to read this description, which the Prophet makes, and which I have briefly opened to you ? Now is there any thing of amiableness or loveliness in such an object as this, that God should part with his Son out of his own bosom ? yet, saith God, in the eighth verse, *Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love ; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness : And then washed I thee with water : yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee.* Nay, further : our condition was such as the Prophet Isaiah describes it to be, Isa. i. 6. *From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores : sores, that deformed us ; sores, that would have destroyed us : now that God should send his Blessed and Well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to bind up and cure the sores of such deformed creatures as we are, doth not this speak his infinite love to us ?*

(2) This love is not only pitched upon deformed creatures, but also upon Froward, Peevish, and Rebellious Creatures.

Of all things in the world, nothing sooner provokes God's wrath, than a slighting and contempt of love. Now God foresaw how men would slight his Son : yet, notwithstanding, he sends him : *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

I might enlarge on the history of our provocations, affronts, and injuries; all which God foresaw out of his own infinite wisdom: and yet, notwithstanding all, his good-will prevailed to send Jesus Christ, who he knew would be scorned and rejected by them to whom he was sent.

4. I might be large in illustrating this good-will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world, as drawn from *those many great benefits, of which, by Christ's coming, we are made partakers.*

Should I instance in temporal things, that would be an abatement to this love of God to us, and the purchase of Christ, whereby we receive pardon of sin, reconciliation of our persons, acceptation with God, sanctification, adoption, hope of glory here, and possession of glory hereafter: all, in and through Jesus Christ.

But I shall not insist upon these, but proceed to make some short APPLICATION.

You have heard somewhat, though infinitely short, of the good-will of God, in sending Jesus Christ into the world: do not you believe it to be true? why else do you solemnize this as a day of joy? Well, then, beware that you do not frustrate God's good-will towards you, in giving Christ to you, by your debaucheries and profaneness on this good day, which you celebrate as a memorial of that great gift. Believe it, and it is sad to consider, as Christ's birth hath been the cause of the salvation of many a soul; so, it may be feared, that Christmas hath been the damnation of many a soul: what through rioting, drunkenness, revelling, gaming, and such like excesses, the Name of Christ hath been greatly dishonoured, under a pretence of honouring his Birth. I have heard a story of a Turkish ambassador, long residing in one of the greatest courts in Christendom: when he returned home to his master, he was by him examined, what customs the Christians observe: he made this answer; That, for Twelve Days in the year, all the Christians ran mad: his observation was but too true, and too much to the disparagement of the Christian Religion. And we may well question, whether there be not more wickedness committed in many places these Twelve Days, than in the other Twelve Months after. What, Sirs, do you think that Christ came into the world only to give you an occasion to eat unto gluttony,

and to drink unto drunkenness? are not these some of the sins, which he came into the world to destroy? and will you make his coming into the world to patronize them? Observe, then, a day; but take the Apostle's direction: He, that observeth a day, let him observe it to the Lord: it is his rule, to observe it with a holy heart, with spiritual meditation, with heavenly affections. This is the only way to reap the benefit of God's good-will, in sending Christ into the world; and this is the only way to ascribe glory to God, for his good-will towards men.

THE
RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.
A SERMON,

PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY, FROM ACTS ii. 24.

WHOM GOD HATH RAISED UP, HAVING LOOSED THE PAINS OF DEATH: BECAUSE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF IT.

CHRISTIAN Religion is founded upon such mysterious and supernatural truths, and the principles of it are so paradoxical to the received opinions of mankind, that the greatest persecution, which it ever found in the world, was not so much from fire and sword, racks and tortures, the evident cruelties of the first opposers of it, as from the magisterial dictates of partial and corrupt reason.

The philosophers, whom Tertullian calls the Patrons of Heretics, have established two peremptory maxims; utterly repugnant unto what the Scripture reveals to us, both concerning our happiness and comfort. The one is, *Ex nihilo, nihil habetur*: "Out of nothing, nothing can be made:" directly levelled against the creation of the world. And the other is, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*: "There is no restoration of the same being, after a total corruption and dissolution of it:" which still continues a great prejudice against the resurrection of our bodies; and which the Oracles of Reason have so much troubled the world with, that, whatsoever seemed in the least contradictory to it, they judged contradictory to common sense, and exploded as ridiculous and impossible.

Under these great disadvantages the Christian Religion laboured: whilst it not only owned the creation of the world out

of nothing, formerly described by Moses; but more clearly and openly attested the resurrection of the dead, which before was not either so clearly known, or so clearly proved: for these doctrines were held so absurd by the great sophisters of the world; whose minds were too deeply tinctured with contrary notions, that they looked upon the Christian Religion as a design rather to destroy reason, than to save the soul: accounting it a very absurd thing to believe in a Crucified Saviour, as being a person weak and impotent; or the future resurrection, as being a thing utterly impossible.

We find the Apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 23, complaining that the Greeks, who were then the great masters of wisdom and learning, esteemed a Crucified Christ *foolishness*: and thought those men little befriended by reason, who would depend for life upon one that lost his own; and who would venture to take off the shamefulness of the cross, or to silence those scoffs that were cast upon those, for their credulity, who affirm the wonderful resurrection of a dead Saviour, and his glorious triumph over death and the grave. For this seemed to them no other than to solve an absurdity by an impossibility; and to make reason more suspicious, in that they judged the fundamentals of reason must be overthrown, to make the fundamentals of Christianity any way tolerable or possible. Wherefore we find, that, even at Athens, that great concourse of wits, where all the sects of philosophers made their common retreat; yet when St. Paul *preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection*, this doctrine seemed so absurd and foolish to them, and so contrary to all principles of right reason, that they forgot that civility which usually is found in men of inquisitive spirits, and brake out into open reproaches and revilings: *What will this babblers say?.....because he preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection*: Acts xvii. 18.

No doubt, they wanted not very specious arguments to urge against the resurrection of the body.

As, first, the impossibility of a re-collection of the dispersed particles of men, resolved into their elements, and scattered by the four winds of heaven: though it might be very well retorted on the Epicureans, who disputed with St. Paul against the Resurrection, that it was not so unlikely a thing that there might be a re-union of the scattered parts of the same man, as that there should be a fortuitous concourse of atoms at the first

making of the world: yet this objection overbore and prevailed with Heathens, so that when they burnt the bodies of Christians, they cast their ashes into the rivers, to confute their hopes of ever being raised again; from whence they should be carried away into an unknown ocean, and there be made the sport of winds and waves. But, what our Saviour says upon the same occasion to the Sadducees, may be said unto these men: *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*: Mat. xxii. 29: for, unless their parts could be scattered beyond the reach of Omnipotency; unless they could be ground so small, as to escape the knowledge and care of God, who ordereth and rangeth every mote that plays up and down in the sunbeams; this dispersion of the body proves not the impossibility of their union, because the power and providence of God will gather up every dust, and rally them together again, into the same place and order as now they are.

Another argument against the resurrection of the body, may be from the various changes, which dead bodies undergo: being, first, turned into earth; that, again, turned into grass and herbs; that, becoming nourishment for other men or beasts; that nourishment again passing into their substance; making a kind of transmigration of bodies, as Pythagoras would have that there was of souls: which is very evident in the case of Anthropomorphites, and Men-Eaters, who have, of several parts of other men's bodies, compounded their own. And so the same question may be demanded, which the Sadducees asked our Saviour, concerning the seven brethren who married the same woman, whose wife of the seven she should be at the Resurrection: so, here, those parts, which belonged to so many men, to which of them belong they in the Resurrection, without detriment to the rest? Here the same answer occurs, which Christ gave them, Mat. xxii. 29. *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*; who is the best judge of property; and can resolve all those parts, by which any nourishment hath been received by any other creatures, unto their own proper bodies again.

And thus it appears, that these arguments against the resurrection of the body amount not to prove the impossibility of the effect; but only the supernatural almighty power of the efficient. Wherefore, granting the Resurrection impossible, according to the original course of natural things; yet, when an

omnipotent arm doth interpose, which gives laws unto it, who dares to say, that the creature may be brought to such a state of dissolution, as may outreach the dominion of the Almighty Creator?

Upon these grounds it is, that the Apostle asketh, why it should be thought a strange and incredible thing, *that God should raise the dead*: Acts xxvi. 8; and, in the text, that he asserts the resurrection of Christ. And, to prevent any fallacious cavils against it, he shews,

First. That God raised him from the dead; and therefore it was not to be accounted a thing impossible, since to God nothing could imply a contradiction.

Secondly. He doth not only assert the possibility of Christ's resurrection, but the impossibility of his final continuance under the power of death.

The grave, which grasps and retains all other mortals, was not able to detain him who hath immortality and life dwelling in himself: *It was not possible that he should be holden of it*; therefore God hath raised him up, loosing *the pains of death*.

Whom God raised up. Here is the efficient cause of Christ's resurrection, in the concurrent action of the whole Trinity; for all, that God doth out of himself, is ascribed to all the Three Persons. Sometimes, it is ascribed to the Father: as the Apostle speaks; *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied.....the Holy One, and the Just, desiring a murderer.....and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead*: Acts iii. 13, 14, 15. Sometimes, it is ascribed to the Son, who, by the infinite power of his divinity, raised up his human nature from the grave: so our Saviour himself tells us, *I lay down my life of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again*: John x. 18. The same may be collected of the Holy Ghost, from the words of the Apostle: *If the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he, that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit*: Rom. viii. 11: now if the Spirit of God can quicken our bodies, the same Spirit also can quicken the body of Christ; since it is the same Spirit that quickens both the Head and the Members.

Having loosed the pains of death. In some copies it is, *Having loosed the pains of hell*: which, possibly, gave occasion to that fond opinion of some, that Christ descended into hell, and there

underwent the pains and penalties of that infernal place, as full satisfaction to the justice of God ; and that these were the pains, from which God raised or loosed him in his resurrection. But this conceit is erroneous and extravagant, and deserves no serious confutation ; especially because it plainly contradicts Christ's *consummatum est* upon the cross ; for, when Christ had undergone his sufferings on the cross he said, *It is finished, and so..... gave up the ghost* : John xix. 30. If Christ therefore did undergo any farther sufferings and pains, than those sufferings which he underwent on the cross, those sufferings would have been so far from being completed and finished, that they would have been but the *præludium*, and beginning of his sorrows. *Having loosed the pains of death* implies no more, but that God raised Jesus Christ from the death, which, after many dolorous pains, he suffered.

It follows : *It was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

This is that on which I intend principally to insist.

I. And, here, I shall shew **UPON WHAT ACCOUNTS IT WAS ALTOGETHER IMPOSSIBLE FOR CHRIST TO BE DETAINED UNDER THE POWER OF DEATH** : and my arguments for the proof hereof are these that follow.

i. It was impossible that Christ should be held under the power of death, **BECAUSE OF THAT GREAT AND INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF THE HYPOSTATICAL UNION OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURE IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST.**

There are Three Unions, the belief of which is the foundation of the greatest part of the Christian Religion, and which are wholly beyond the reach of reason : the mystical union of a believer unto Christ : the union, or rather unity, of the Three Glorious Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in one nature : and this hypostatical union of two natures in one person, in the Mediator. It is a mystery, which angels pry into and adore, with wonder and astonishment, how the eternal, only-begotten Son of God should assume flesh to himself, in so close and intimate a conjunction, that, though he be eternal, yet he should be born ; though he be immortal, yet he should truly die ; and though he were truly dead, yet he should raise himself to life again. These are things, which seem very inconsistent one with another ; yet they truly come to pass through this miraculous union, which transcends the reach of reason, as

far as these things do that of nature: that the same person, who is eternal, should be young, yea be born in the fulness of time; that the same person, who hath immortality and life dwelling in himself, should also die a shameful and accursed death; that the same person, who was truly and really dead, yet had a power to quicken and recover himself: John x. 18. And this was it, which *declared him to be the Son of God with power*, as the Apostle speaks, even *by his resurrection from the dead*: Rom. i. 4.

And, indeed, if he had not risen from the dead, the Deity would have suffered in the opinion of the world; nor would they have believed him to be the Son of God, who would suffer himself to lie under the dominion of death, longer than the end of his death required it.

And this I shall demonstrate to you by Two arguments: only premising this, which is a common and true maxim among divines; That when the natural union between Christ's body and soul was dissolved, yet both soul and body did retain the hypostatical union to the divine nature: the divine nature was united to the body of Christ, when the soul was separated from it.

1. *If Christ could not have raised himself, it must have been either from a Want of Power, or from a Want of Will, to do it.*

He could not want Power to raise himself, because he was God; equal in power, and in all other divine attributes, with the Father.

As the resurrection of the dead is not impossible to the infinite power of God; so neither can it be, that that God, who had a will to assume our flesh, should want a Will to raise it up: that that God, who so loved the human nature, as to associate it into oneness of person with himself, should yet suffer it to continue under the power of death; which is, of all things, most contrary to his natural inclinations. We see Christ, in his agony, prayed most fervently that the bitter cup might pass from him, insomuch that he strained clotted blood through him: and, certainly, one ingredient in that cup was the separation of soul and body by death; which is that, which even innocent nature itself abhorred, as destructive to him; yet, having taken our nature upon him for this very end, that, *by death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*: Heb. ii. 14, he voluntarily submitted himself to undergo it; and, this end being fully accomplished by his death, and the truth of his death

likewise attested by his lying three days in the earth, it was altogether impossible that that person, who had an abhorrence of death and a power to raise himself, should continue longer under the arrest and dominion of it.

And this is the First demonstration of the necessity of the resurrection of Christ, upon the account of both natures in one person: as man, he abhorred the separation of soul and body; as God, he was able to re-unite them: so that having, as man, a desire to live, and, as God, a power to live, it was impossible for him to be holden of death.

2. *Because of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, it was impossible that his Flesh should see Corruption*; which yet it must certainly have done, had he not been raised in a short space after his death.

For, since Christ's body was not a phantastical body, as some of old held, but made of true flesh, and of the same temper and constitution with ours, it must, without a miracle, have undergone such changes after death as ours shall do: and, to imagine the contrary, is but to feign one miracle, to avoid the necessity of another; even of the Resurrection. But, it was utterly impossible that that body, which was united to both natures by so close and unconceivable a bond, should ever see corruption; that is, a putrefaction in the grave: this the Scripture clearly asserts to us: *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*: Acts ii. 27. And, also, because all bodies, which are corrupted, turn into some other thing and some other nature; according to that undoubted maxim of the philosophers, *corruptio unius est generatio alterius*: and so this horrid and blasphemous consequence would follow, that the divine nature of the Son of God might have been joined to some other. So that it was necessary that Christ should be raised again, before any corruption or putrefaction, by ordinary course of nature, seized upon him.

Thus I have proved, by these two arguments, that, because of the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature of Christ in one person, it was altogether impossible he could be holden of death.

ii. Another argument is this: It was impossible that Christ should be holden of death, BECAUSE OF GOD'S VERACITY; AND THE TRUTH OF THOSE PREDICTIONS, WHICH WERE BEFORE MADE

CONCERNING CHRIST, in those many types and prophecies of the Old Testament; all which God's faithfulness stood engaged to fulfil.

I shall only mention that famous prediction, which St. Peter here subjoins, as a proof of the subject I am now treating upon: Acts ii. 24, 25, 27. *It was not possible*, says he, *that Christ should be holden of death: For, saith the Apostle, David speaketh concerning him....Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* And this prophecy the Apostle quotes out of the Psalmist: Psal. xvi. 10. That it did not belong to David, and that he did not speak it concerning himself when he indited that Psalm, the Apostle shews, vv. 29, 30, of this chapter: where he proves that David was dead and buried, and underwent the common lot that all other dead bodies did, putrefying and mouldering away in the earth; and therefore he was not that Holy One that should never see corruption, because that prophecy must belong to such an one who must so taste of death: and this is clearly implied in the former expression, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, that is, in the state of the dead; for so is hell to be understood there, as I shall shew more at large. Neither could it belong to any of those, who, before Christ, were raised miraculously from the dead, and brought back out of the state of death; yet was it not in such a manner, that they were not to return again to it: so that if they did not in the first, yet in their second dying they saw corruption. This then could belong to none of them, and therefore must of necessity belong to Christ.

And since the Apostle lays so much stress on this argument, give me leave a little to consider the meaning of it, and how it is applicable to Him.

And, here, I shall not trouble you with the various opinions of those, who have attempted to interpret these words, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*: some thinking, that, by this hell, into which Christ descended, is meant the place of the damned, where he preached the Gospel to them, freeing those that would believe from their pains: others, that it was one great partition of it, called *Limbus Patrum*; "the repository of the souls of those Fathers" who died in obedience to God and in faith of the Messiah, before Christ came in the flesh; and that the reason of his descent thither was, that he might release those souls from chains, and carry them with him to heaven; so that, ever since,

that mansion in hell hath been left void, without any inhabitants: but these opinions are not capable of any sufficient proof.

I shall, therefore, give you that interpretation and judgment, which carries with it the strongest current, both of Scripture and Reason. The word *Hades*, which we translate *Hell*, is very often, by the Septuagint, in the Old Testament, used to signify the Grave, or the state of the dead: so, in Gen. xliv. 31, we translate it *the Grave*; but it is the same word, that is used for *Hell* in the text: and thus the word is used in other places of Scripture, as also in other authors, to signify the place and state of the dead and of separate souls. And, for the leaving of the soul of Christ in *Hades*, or in *Hell*, we must know, that it is a thing not unusual in Scripture, to call a man that is dead by the name of *soul*: so, the Septuagint translate that place in Leviticus, ch. xxi. 11. They shall not be defiled with *dead souls*, meaning dead carcasses: *neither shall they go in to any dead souls*: the word is *dead bodies*. But, not to detain you any longer on this speculation, though of great use for the right understanding of this excellent place of Scripture: if we take *Hell* for *the Grave*, we must take the Soul for the Body, *Thou wilt not leave my body in the grave*; but, if, by *Hell*, be here understood the state of death, that is, the state of separation of soul and body, the interpretation will be more easy and natural: *Thou wilt not leave my soul* in a state of separation from the body; but wilt certainly unite them together again, and raise me up before I shall feel corruption.

Thus I have given you the interpretation of the prophecy of David, which, upon the account of God's truth and veracity, was to take effect in the Resurrection of our Saviour; and, therefore, it being foretold that he should not see corruption, the faithfulness of God was obliged, within that time, inviolably to raise him up.

And that is the Second Reason, why it was impossible that Christ should be holden of death, because it was foretold of him, that his soul should not rest in hell; that is, either his body in the grave, or his soul in a state of separation from his body.

iii. Another argument is this: It was impossible that Christ could be holden by death, UPON THE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S JUSTICE.

For justice, as it doth oblige to inflict punishment upon the guilty, so also to absolve and acquit the innocent. Now, though Christ *knew no sin*, yet was he *made sin for us*: that is, our sins

were imputed to and charged upon him; and, so, through a voluntary susception and undertaking of them, he became guilty of them. Hereupon, divine justice seized upon him, as being our Surety; and demanded satisfaction from him for our offences. Now no other satisfaction would be acceptable unto God nor commensurate to our sins, but the bearing of an infinite load of wrath and vengeance; which, if it had been laid upon us, must have been prolonged to an eternity of sufferings; for, because we are finite creatures, we cannot bear infinite degrees of wrath at once; and, therefore, we must have lain under those infinite degrees of wrath to an infinite duration: but, Christ being God, he could bear the load of infinite degrees of wrath at once upon him: in that one bitter draught, the whole cup of that fury and wrath of God, which we should have been everlastingly drinking off by little drops, Christ drank off at once. Now it is the nature and constitution of all laws, that, when a person, by undergoing the penalty which those laws require, hath made satisfaction for the offence committed, the person satisfying ought to be protected as innocent: it could not therefore consist with the justice of God, that, when Christ had satisfied his utmost demands, that any of the punishment due to our sins, for which he satisfied, should have lain upon him longer; for that would have been no other than punishing without an offence. Now nothing is clearer in Scripture, than that death is a punishment inflicted upon us for sin: so says the Apostle; *The wages of sin is death*: Rom. vi. 23: and, in another place; by sin, death entered into the world, and *death passed upon all*, because *all have sinned*: ch. v. 12. From all which it follows, that, as Christ, taking upon him our sins, became thereby liable to death; so, having satisfied for our sins, and thereby freed himself from the guilt that he lay under by imputation, he was no longer liable unto death, which is one part of the punishment he underwent: so that it could not have been agreeable to Infinite Justice, that Christ should have been holden of death, who, by his undergoing of death, hath sustained the whole load of God's infinite wrath and displeasure, and fully satisfied for all those sins that were imputed to him; and therefore ought, in justice, to be acquitted from all penalties, and consequently from death.

iv. It was impossible that Christ should be holden of death,
IN RESPECT OF HIS OFFICE OF MEDIATORSHIP.

For, having as our Mediator undertaken the desperate service of bringing sinful and fallen man to life and happiness, he must of necessity not only die, but rise again from the dead; without which, his death, and whatever else he did or suffered for us, would have been of no avail.

There are two things requisite, before any real or eternal benefit can become ours :

A meritorious Purchase, procuring the thing itself for us.

An effectual Application of that benefit to us.

The purchase of mercy was made by the Death of Christ, by which a full price was paid down to the justice of God : but the effectual application of mercy is by the Life and Resurrection of Christ. Wherefore, if Christ had only died, and not risen again ; if he had not overcome death within its own empire, and triumphed over the grave in its own territories ; it would have been to his disappointment, and not at all to our salvation. The loss of Christ's life would not have procured life for us, unless, as he laid it down with freedom, so he had again restored it with power : our hope of salvation otherwise would have been buried in the same grave with himself ; but what he died to procure, he lives to confer.

It was ignorance of Christ's resurrection from the dead, that so staggered the two disciples going to Emmaus ; Luke xxiv. 16, 19, 20, 21. They tell Christ himself a sad story of one Jesus of Nazareth, that was condemned and crucified ; “ who, while he lived among us, by his word and works testified himself to be the true Messiah : we little thought of his dying ; and, when he told us of his Death, he likewise foretold us of his Resurrection the third day ; and, behold, *the third day* is already come, and yet is there no appearance of this Jesus. Verily, *we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel* : but now our hopes grow faint, and languish in us ; for, certainly, there can be no redemption for Israel by him, who cannot redeem himself from death.”

Nothing in the world did so much prejudice the Gospel, and hinder its taking place in the hearts of Heathens in the primitive times, as the cross and death of Christ : for, believing that he was lifted up upon the cross, but not believing that he was raised up from the dead, they assented to their natural reason, which herein taught them, that it was folly to expect life from him, who could not either preserve or restore his own. It is true, it was folly thus to hope, but that his life applies what his death

deserved; and our salvation begun on the cross, is perfected on the throne: and therefore the Apostle tells us, that our faith in a crucified Saviour, and our obedience to him, is all vain, if he had not risen again from the dead: 1 Cor. xv. 17: for, unless he had risen from the dead, he could not have acquitted us from the guilt of sin, because he could not have been justified himself. We are justified by the righteousness of Christ, as the Apostle speaks, in his Epistle to the Romans; Rom. iv. 25, which righteousness he wrought out for us, both by his perfect obedience to the Law and by his submission to the punishment of the Law: but, yet, this righteousness could not have availed to our justification, had he not, after the fulfilling of it, risen again from the dead; because he himself had not been justified, much less could we have been justified by one who could not have justified himself. And therefore we read, *Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh*, in his Incarnation; *justified in the Spirit*, by his Resurrection; *seen of angels*, in his Ascension: 1 Tim. iii. 16: had he not been raised and quickened by the Spirit, that is, by the glorious power of his divine nature, he had not been declared just, nor could he have justified us: for this declaration, that Christ was just, was made upon the resurrection of his body from the dead; by which he was set free from all those penalties due to our sins, that were imputed to him. If, therefore, the justification and salvation of sinners was a design laid by the infinite wisdom of God, it must needs follow, that it was impossible for Christ to be kept under death, because that would have obstructed their justification and salvation; and so would have brought a disappointment upon the infinite wisdom of God, which was impossible to be done: and therefore, consequently, Christ could not be holden of death.

II. The APPLICATION of this great truth shall be briefly in these following Inferences.

i. If it was impossible for Christ not to have risen from the dead, IT IS EVIDENT, THEN, THAT CHRIST IS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

For, had he been an impostor or false prophet, it would have been so far from an impossibility that he should not have been raised, that it would have been a very impossibility for him to have risen again: for, neither could he have raised himself, being a mere man; neither would God have raised him, being a mere impostor and cheat. When, therefore, the Jews called for a

sign from Christ to prove him to be the true Messiah, he gives them the sign of his resurrection: Mat. xii. 38, 39, 40. *Master, say they, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* So, again, when they tempted him at another time, for a sign of his being the Messiah, he still instances in his powerful resurrection from the dead: John ii. 18, 19. *The Jews answered and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* So that, still, he made his Death and Resurrection to be the infallible proof of his being the true Messiah.

ii. If it were necessary that Christ should rise from the dead, and if he did do so, THEN, CERTAINLY, SIN IS CONQUERED.

For the sting of death, and that envenomed weapon whereby it wounds yea kills the sinner, is sin; and, so long as death had this sting in it, it could not have been conquered by any sinner. It is sin, that gives death its power to hold fast all those, who come within its reach: which since it could not do with Christ, it is evident sin is subdued by Christ; who was in its arms and grasp, but yet came safe out from it, taking away the sting and weapon of death with him.

iii. If the resurrection of Christ be thus necessary, and hath been thus effectually accomplished, we may comfortably from thence conclude THE NECESSITY OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

For, the Head being raised, the Members shall not always sleep in the dust. Christ's mystical body shall certainly be raised, as well as his natural body; and every Member of it shall be made for ever glorious, with a glorious and triumphant Head.

And *, from each of these considerations, what abundant

* From this place to the end is added from the Appendix, where it is printed, with a direction that it should "be inserted at the end of the Sermon on the Resurrection." It seems to have been added to the original Sermon for a Sacramental occasion; and is taken, for the most part, nearly word for word, from the Author's Discourse on the Two Sacraments. See pp. 435, 436. of vol ii. of this edition. EDITOR.

cause have we of joy and exultation ! Of joy, in that his resurrection hath afforded us an irrefragable testimony to convince the world, that we have not misplaced our faith, our hope, our worship ; since that Jesus whom we serve, was not only lifted up on the cross, but gloriously raised from the grave. Of joy, in that his resurrection is an infallible evidence to us, that the debt is paid, when the Surety is discharged from the arrest : that now God's justice will as well acquit us from our guilt, as his mercy ; since it is not consistent with the rules and measures of justice, to punish the same offence in the principals, for which the Surety hath fully satisfied. And, lastly, of joy, in that his resurrection is a most certain and assured pledge of ours : and that he hath risen before us, only to pluck us out of our graves ; and is ascended into heaven before us, only to prepare mansions for us, and, by the virtue of his resurrection and intercession, to lift us from the dust, to sit together with him in heavenly places.

And now, truly, the best way that I know to affect your hearts with joy for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is, first to lead you to his cross and sepulchre. Let me say unto you, as the angel did to the women, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

Behold him, first, in his Death and Sufferings. See the Lord upon the cross, pouring out his blood and his soul for you ; and this will be a good help to heighten your joy, when you shall consider him risen again, and come triumphantly from under all his agonies and sorrows. This day exhibits Christ unto you, both bleeding and reigning, suffering and conquering, dying and reviving : all the glorious achievements of Redemption are this day to be represented lively to your faith and devotion ; and as a messenger sent to you by Christ, I do, in his name, invite you to come and see your Lord, and mourn over him in the holy institution of his Supper. I know we are apt to wish, that we had lived in the time of Christ's abode here upon earth ; that we had been conversant with him, as his disciples were, to have seen both his miraculous actions, and his no less miraculous passion. Why, truly, the disciples' sight of these things hath no advantage at all above our faith. If we can but act faith in this ordinance, which we are this day to partake of, these things will 'be now present to us. There shall we see Christ crucified before our eyes ; yea, and crucified as truly and really to our faith, as ever he was to the sense of others. This can carry us

into the garden, and make us do more than they, even watch with him in his agonies. This can carry us, without being befriended by acquaintance, into the judgment-hall, to hear his whole trial and arraignment. This can lead us, with the multitude and crowd of people, to his cross; and, in this ordinance, we may see his body broken and his blood poured out, and hear him crying *It is finished*, and see him at last give up the ghost. All this the holy sacrament doth as lively represent to the eye of faith, as if it were now doing. Consider: were there a sight to be represented, at which heaven, and earth, and hell itself, should stand amazed; wherein God himself should suffer, not only in the form of a servant, but under the notion of a malefactor; wherein the everlasting happiness of all mankind, from the first creation of the world to the final dissolution of it, should be transacted; in which you might see the venom and poisonous strength of all our sins wrung into one bitter cup, and that put into the hands of the Son of God to drink the very dregs of it; in which you might see the gates of hell broken to pieces, devils conquered, and all the powers of darkness: were there, I say, but such a sight as this, so dreadful and yet so glorious, to be now represented, would you not all desire to be spectators of it? Why, I invite you to it this day: only come, and come with faith, and you may see the Son of God slain, the blood of God poured out: you may see Him, who takes away transgressions, numbered himself among transgressors: you may see him hanging on the soreness and tenderness of his hands and feet; all our iniquities meeting upon him, and the eternity of divine wrath and vengeance contracted into a short space, and, as beams through a burning-glass, made more violent and scorching by that contraction. Come, therefore, and see, and let your eye affect your heart with deep and bitter sorrow, that ever you should embrue your hands in the blood of your Saviour, that ever you should be his executioners and murderers, that ever your sins and guilt should squeeze so much gall and wormwood into the bitter cup of his passion.

And, when you have thus wept over your dying Lord, let joy and gladness again fill your hearts, for he is risen: he is risen from death to life, from earth to heaven; by the one, to confirm our faith; by the other, to prepare our glory.

A DISCOURSE
ON THE
STATE AND WAY OF SALVATION.

FROM HEB. vi. 9.

*Read at Little New
9th October 1814*

BUT, BELOVED, WE ARE PERSUADED BETTER THINGS OF YOU, AND
THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION, THOUGH WE THUS SPEAK.

INTRODUCTION.

BETTER things. Indeed, the Apostle had, in the foregoing verses, spoken very dreadful and fatal things, concerning some hypocritical and unsound professors. And his discourse of them may be reduced unto these Three heads:

The high Attainments of such professors.

The wretched Apostacy of such hypocrites.

The fearful Perdition of such apostates.

First. He discovers their Attainments; and gives us, as it were, the *ultimum quod sic*, the highest strain and pitch that such can reach unto.

They may,

First. Be *enlightened*, i. e. baptized; and have a deep and searching knowledge into the mysteries of the Gospel, so as clearly to understand them, and to unfold them perspicuously and demonstratively unto others.

Secondly. They may *have tasted of the heavenly gift*. They may have some relishes upon their spirits, of the excellency, sweetness, and preciousness of Jesus Christ, the greatest gift God ever gave to the world.

Thirdly. They may be *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, in his gifts; those *Xarismata*, which were poured forth upon the Church. And those, both extraordinary; such as were then bestowed upon the Primitive Church, as the gift of tongues, of

prophecy, of working miracles : and also ordinary, in illumination ; conviction ; partial reformation ; fluent elocution, both to God in prayer and to men in instruction ; which still remain to this day, and are dispensed in common, both to those who are savingly wrought upon, and to those who are utter strangers to the life of grace and the power of true godliness.

Fourthly. They may *have tasted the good word of God* ; and may have found so much sweetness and comfort in the doctrine and promises of it, as to hear it gladly with Herod, and to receive it joyfully with the stony ground.

Fifthly. They may have tasted of *the powers of the world to come* ; and have had some prelibations of eternal glory, in some ecstasical raptures and transports of spirit, as if they were gotten quite above mortality : and these foretastes may entertain them with fair and flourishing hopes, that they shall for ever drink of those rivers of pleasure that flow at God's right-hand.

These, you see, are great and high attainments, which the Apostle allows to unsound professors : vv. 4, 5.

For that they were never otherwise, appears,

Secondly. In the Defection and Apostacy of these hypocrites from all these glorious attainments.

And this apostacy is not only gradual and partial ; such as is too often incident to the best saints, who decline from the spiritualness and excellency of their first ways : but total and final ; ending in a malicious renouncing of the truth, and the profession of the name of Christ, which is the very formality of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. If such *shall fall away*, it is impossible *to renew them again unto repentance* : v. 6. and, therefore, it is alike impossible that ever they should be pardoned. For this conditional proposition, *if they fall away*, supposeth a possibility of it ; because the Apostle gives it both as a caution against security, and a motive to a farther progress and perfection. They may *fall*, and *fall away*, and fall away to an utter impossibility of renewing them again unto repentance.

Thirdly. He discovers the woeful Perdition of these apostates.

And that he doth by an elegant similitude, taken from barren ground ; to which such apostates are compared, v. 8. For, if God hath manured them, and caused the dew of heaven to fall plentifully upon them from his ordinances, and yet they bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, let them know that they lie under a most tremendous doom.

First. They are *rejected* of God; reprobated and hated of him. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him:* Heb. x. 38.

Secondly. They are *nigh unto* a curse. The dreadful curse of God hangs hovering over their heads; and, would they but look about them, they might see thick and black clouds gathering, and ready to break upon them and overwhelm them with a tempest of the divine wrath and fury, and they would live in a certain fearful expectation of fiery indignation to devour and consume them. For,

Thirdly. Their *end is to be burned.* They are cut out to be firebrands for hell; ordained of old unto this condemnation: who so long wilfully withdraw from God, that they fall into the Devil's arms; and recede so far backward from Christ and their seeming piety and splendid profession, that they tumble into everlasting fire; and there for ever suffer the most acute tortures, the most direful plagues, that either the infinite wisdom of God can prepare, or the infinite power of God inflict; and lie eternally cursing and accursed, under the revenges of that God, whom they have maliciously despited.

But, lest any tender-hearted Christian should be discouraged and dejected by this terrible and startling doctrine; a doctrine, which might have then, and hath since, caused many sad fears to seize upon the spirits of those, who are true and sincere, but yet timorous and doubting saints; the Apostle comforts them in the words of my text: and tells them, that, though he had spoken so sharply against apostates, yet they should not apply it to themselves, as though he suspected them for such; that his discourse was directed unto them, not as censure, but as caution; not as judging them to be such, but forewarning them lest they should be such. As if he should say, "Interpret not what I have spoken, as if I thought you forlorn and cursed apostates from Christ: these things do not appertain to you, otherwise than as matter that deserves your care and caution: for, though I have propounded to you the danger of apostacy; yet I have great confidence of the sincerity of your profession, and the perseverance of your faith and obedience: *We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*"

From this coherence of the words with the context, we may observe,

That there is great need to preach rousing and terrifying doctrines, even to true and real believers. Thunder is said to purge the air; and to cleanse it from those impure vapours, with which it is apt to abound when it hath been long serene and stagnant.

And, truly, thundering doctrine is of great use,

First. Not only to convince the hypocrite: when the word shall be applied so critically, that he can no longer hide himself from the evidence of it, nor any longer lurk under the false disguise of a seeming sanctity; but his own conscience will detect him, and deal as roundly with him, as he hath dealt dissemblingly both with God and man: nor,

Secondly. To rouse and awaken the secure; and, by alarming them with the terrors of the Lord, make them start out of their supine reclusiveness, and stupid neglect of their souls and eternal concerns: but,

Thirdly. It is necessary also to make those, who are true and sincere Christians, cautious and circumspect; to stand upon their watch, lest they also draw back unto perdition, and bring upon themselves all the woes and curses which they hear denounced against these wretched apostates. *Let him, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall: 1 Cor. x. 12.*

And, whereas he sweetens this terrible doctrine, by declaring his good hopes and opinion concerning them; observe,

That such rousing and terrifying truths require a great deal of holy prudence and caution in the delivering of them. Ministers ought not always to denounce woe and wrath; nor at all adventures to fling abroad swords, arrows, and death; nor, like a company of whifflers in a show, spit fire at every man they meet.

For this indiscreet preaching of hell and damnation, not making a careful distinction between persons and persons, doth but,

First. Harden the wicked, while it puts them into as good a condition as any others.

Secondly. Grieve the good; and sadden the hearts of those, whom God would not have made sad: while it rattles out the terrors of the Lord, without any discrimination; and leaves them no means, nor advantage, of applying those comforts to themselves, which of right belong unto them. And,

Thirdly. It prejudiceth all, inasmuch as it is apt to beget only a slavish fear; and that fear an aversion to God, and to that religion, which is thus imprudently represented as only dreadful and frightful.

But, to wave these things, that, which I shall principally consider, is that clause in the text, *Things, that accompany salvation.*

In which I shall enquire,

The Meaning of the Phrase.

What those things are, which do thus *accompany salvation.*

For the Meaning and Import of the Expression; we must here take notice, that *Salvation* may be taken in a Twofold sense: either,

For the full and actual Possession of it. Or,

For our Right and Title to it, and some initials of it already begun in us.

In the former sense, it signifies the glory and happiness of the saints in heaven, when they are no longer *viatores*, but *comprehensores*; no longer travellers thither, but possessors of their inheritance. And thus it is not to be understood in this place. For many things accompany this salvation, which cannot be verified of the best and holiest saints, while they are here in this life: as, the clear and immediate vision and fruition of God; our perfect immunity from all sin and corruption; our final deliverance from all sorrows and sufferings, and the like: which the choicest believers do not enjoy, while they are here on earth; but they are reserved for them till they arrive at heaven, to be the completion of all their hopes, and their full and eternal reward.

This *Salvation* then, which the text mentions, is only Salvation in Right and Title: for then also are we said to be saved, when we have a right unto the eternal inheritance, and the initials and beginnings of it are wrought in our souls. This is a salvation on this side heaven: which we may well call a State of Salvation, or a certain tendency unto it; which will, at last, infallibly end in a full and entire enjoyment of it. Now all those things, which are previous and antecedent to our eternal salvation in heaven, are concomitants and associates with this salvation: and therefore are said to *accompany salvation*, because they are to be found in all those, who have a true right unto the glory of heaven for

the present, and shall be brought unto the possession of it hereafter.

Hence observe,

That a STATE OF SALVATION HATH PROPER AND PECULIAR THINGS BELONGING UNTO IT, WHICH ARE NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OTHER CONDITION.

Now, here,

I. NEGATIVELY:

i. These things ARE NOT ONLY EXTERNAL PRIVILEGES, NOR THE DISPENSATION OF THE ORDINANCES OF JESUS CHRIST.

Indeed, these are ordinarily necessary as the means of salvation, without which none can, according to God's ordinary way of working, come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved: for *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*: Rom. x. 17. But, yet, they are not inseparable concomitants of this state: many enjoy the ordinances and means of grace, who yet are utter strangers to God; and despise that grace, which they were instituted to convey. And, therefore, as they prove great furtherances to the salvation of some, so they accidentally prove the occasion of obduration and sorer condemnation to others: as the same rain from heaven rots some trees, that makes others to sprout and grow; so the same ordinances do accidentally rot and corrupt some wretched souls, and make them the fitter fuel for hell-fire, which cause others, that are trees of righteousness and plants of renown, to flourish, and spring, and bring forth much precious fruit unto God. And therefore we find, that God gives a most sad and dreadful commission to his prophet Isaiah, ch. vi. 9. *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

Rest not, therefore, in ordinances: that you hear the word, and receive the sacraments; that you have the tenor of the covenant explained, and the seals of it applied. These are, indeed, means of grace; but they are not evidences of it: they are things, which promote salvation; but they do not necessarily accompany it: and he, who hath no better a title for heaven, than only that he sits under the enjoyment of these, will find all his fond hopes miserably disappointed, when he shall hear

Christ pronounce a dreadful doom, even upon those, who have eaten and drunk in his presence, and whom he himself had taught and instructed: *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

Nor,

ii. Are THE COMMON GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, those *things, that accompany salvation.*

These, indeed, are of great use and excellency; but yet they may be found in those, who are wholly devoid of true grace and the life of God. Many hypocrites may be endowed with a great measure of these gifts; and, sometimes, much beyond those, who are true and sincere Christians. Their gifts may further the salvation of others, when they only aggravate their own damnation. As Noah made use of those to build his ark, who yet were themselves drowned in the deluge; and as Solomon employed the Syrians, who were heathens, to prepare materials for the temple: so God doth, sometimes, make use of the gifts and abilities of wicked and ungodly men for the benefit and salvation of his Church. But, yet, those very parts and gifts, which help on the salvation of others, contribute not to the salvation of the owners; but rather to the increase of their future torments, because their knowledge, and gifts, and parts render them the more inexcusable before God.

Nor,

iii. Are THE COMMON GRACES OF THE HOLY GHOST, those *things, that accompany salvation.*

There are many previous works wrought upon the souls of those, who are brought near unto salvation; but, through their quenching of the Spirit and resisting of his motions, they provoke him to withdraw, and so they never attain it.

Nor,

iv. Are INWARD JOYS AND COMFORTS those *things, that do necessarily accompany salvation.*

Nay, indeed, a true Christian may, many times, go mourning and heavily, when a hypocrite shall flaunt and triumph in his joys; and boast of his evidences, and ravishments, and overpowering consolations, as if he were the only favourite and minion of heaven, whom God delighted to caress and dandle as the darling of his affections. See that proud Pharisee, Luke

xviii. 11: *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.... nor as this publican: and that hypocritical church of Thyatira: Rev. iii. 17. I am rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing.* Thus, through the delusions of Satan and their own self-flattery, they may bring themselves into a golden dream, that they are rich in enjoyments, increased in graces, and stand in need of nothing which might make them either holy or happy: and so they give themselves the same applause, that the rich fool gave his soul; *Soul, thou hast....goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But, alas! these over-weening conceits prove gross delusions! How many have we seen, who have prided themselves in their joys, and would be still boasting what sweetness of spirit, and soul ravishments, and other such like melting things they have felt, turn utter apostates from the truth, and the profession of godliness!

These, therefore, are not the *things, that accompany salvation*: but a man may suffer everlasting torments, who hath tasted many delusive joys and comforts: he may drink deep of the cup of God's wrath and fury, who hath tasted of the powers of the world to come: he may go down to hell with many church-privileges and ordinances, excellent gifts and parts, with many common graces of the Spirit, many convictions, many good wishes and desires, yea and many good duties too, and there suffer the vengeance of everlasting fire, and have all these burnt about him.

These things, therefore, are no firm support for your hope; no good evidences for your future happiness: and, therefore, trust not your souls upon them: they will sink under you, and deceive you. They are only common things; and may belong to any, who live under Gospel-Dispensations. Hearing, praying, professing, receiving the sacraments, though they be absolutely necessary to salvation, as means; yet they are not, as evidences: they are distinguishing marks of Christians from those of another religion; but they are not distinguishing marks of saints from hypocrites. Or, if you will have them evidences, they are rather exclusive evidences, than conclusive: that is, it is an assured evidence that they are no true Christians, who do neglect, or disown, or despise these things: whosoever doth so, is certainly excluded from this number, and from all hopes and possibility of salvation. But they are not conclusive evidences:

we cannot certainly conclude, that such a man is a true Christian, or in the state of salvation, because such things may be found upon him.

II. And, therefore, in the next place, let us see **WHAT THESE THINGS ARE, THAT DO ACCOMPANY SALVATION.**

And they are of Three sorts :

Certain Principles of Faith in the Understanding.

Certain Gracious Impressions upon the Heart and Will.

A certain regular Obedience in the whole course of a man's Life and Conversation.

And here we must, upon every one of these, discover these Two things :

What those principles, habits, and obedience are. And then,

Whether we have those principles, impressions, and obedience in a saving manner.

i. The FIRST sort of *things, that accompany salvation*, are

1. *Divine Principles of Truth in the understanding.*

And these are of two kinds; either doctrinal, or practical: those, whose immediate tendency is information of the judgment; or those, whose immediate effect is the influencing and regulating of our lives and practice.

(1) Doctrinal Principles, are absolutely necessary to salvation.

Such, I mean, as are the vital and fundamental articles of the Christian Faith. It is true, it is not necessary for every private Christian to busy and beat his head about the nice and curious questions of religion, which have always been disputed; but will never be decided, until our imperfect knowledge give place to perfect. Some things in Christian Religion are ornamental; and such are the more abstruse points, which are not so clearly revealed to us in the Scriptures: these, indeed, those, who are of parts and have competent leisure, ought to search into, as the noblest study and science they can employ themselves about. Other things are fundamental and vital, the ignorance of which excludes men from all possibility of salvation: and these we

ought to know and believe explicitly; as being truths, which are most clearly revealed to us.

And such are,

[1] The doctrine of the Ever-Blessed Trinity: that there is One Infinite Essence, in Three distinct Hypostases or Persons.

A mystery, far beyond all the comprehension of reason, and far deeper than the longest line of our understanding can possibly fathom; yet we are bound to adore and believe what we cannot comprehend: yea, and thus far reason itself teacheth us, that such a being cannot be God, which may be comprehended by man. This mystery of Three in One, the Scripture hath expressly declared to us: 1 John v. 7. *There are three, that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*: they are *one*, not only in their record and testimony, as some heretics would gloss the place to evade the clear force of it; but in essence, being, power, nature, and all the divine attributes and perfections: for, were this unity only in testimony, it might well be wondered why the Apostle should, in the very next verse, alter the phrase, and there tell us, *that the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, agree in one*: here, it is evident, from the manner of expression, that these are *one* only in testimony; but, when it is said, of *the Father*, and *the Word*, (that is Jesus Christ, that *Word* which *was made flesh*,) and *the Spirit*, not that they *agree in one*, but that they *are one*, it can bear no other signification, but that they are one infinite, eternal, ever-blessed essence, having all the same essential properties and perfections. How far the express belief of this great truth was necessary before the incarnation of our Saviour, I will not now dispute; though there want not sufficient evidences that it was known to the Jews then: but, since our obligation to believe a truth is proportionable to the evidence that can be produced for it; therefore now, since the Scripture is express in this particular, an explicit belief of it is necessary to us, whatsoever it were to them: yea, so far necessary in order to eternal life, that he, who denieth and opposeth it, cannot worship the True God, who is Three in One; cannot worship the Lord Jesus Christ, who is as truly and verily God as he is Man; and therefore cannot be in any capacity of obtaining salvation. For it is the highest idolatry in the world, to worship that for our God, which is not so: now our God is Three in One; and therefore they, who pretend to worship him, whom yet they deny to be so, do but worship an idol of their own

fancying, and not the True God. Yea, our Saviour Jesus Christ makes this to be a fundamental Article of our Faith: John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*: so that, if we know not God, as he is the True God, we cannot have eternal life; but as he is the True God, so he is Three Persons in One Nature and Essence. But some may say, “This seems rather to make against it: for, if the Father be *the only True God*, then how can Jesus Christ be the True God too?” To this I answer, that the particle *only* refers not to the Father, but to the *True God*: now the word *God* is an essential, and not a personal attribution; and so both God the Father is *the only True God*, and God the Son is *the only True God*, and God the Holy Ghost is *the only True God*, because they are all one and the same *only True God*: our Saviour saith not that only the father is the True God, but the father is *the only True God*: and so also is each person in the Ever-Blessed Trinity; for the Godhead is not divided with the Persons, and therefore there is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but these are all *the only True God*.

This is the First Doctrinal Principle.

[2] Another principle, consequent upon the former, is the knowledge and belief of that great mystery of the Two Natures united in One Person of our Lord Christ.

This is, likewise, a fundamental truth: truth, as to both parts of it; both that he is God, and that he is man. This we find most clearly asserted by the Apostle, Rom. i. 3, 4. *Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*. His divinity is most irrefragably proved, past all the cunning evasions of Socinian perverseness, in many places of Scripture; but, especially, in the first to the Hebrews, v. 8. *Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*: and, vv. 10, 11, 12. speaking of the same Son, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish, but thou remainest....they shall change: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail*: not to mention v. 3. *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Father's person, and upholding all things by the word of his power*: nor v. 2. *By whom also he made the worlds*. Where, I think, we may challenge all the wit of hell to evade the force of this argument. He, certainly, is *the only True*

God, who is God the Creator: for *he, that made all things, is God*, saith the Apostle, Heb. iii. 4: but so is the Lord Jesus Christ, as these places do abundantly testify; and therefore he is True God, a God by nature and essence, and not only by authority and donation. Again, if Jesus Christ ought to be served and worshipped by us, then certainly he is a God by nature; but none, who acknowledge the name of Christ, excepting that accursed Blandatra and a few of his adherents, will deny that he ought to be worshipped, whom all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship, Heb. i. 6. *Let all the angels of God worship him*: therefore he must needs be God by nature, and not by office only. See, for this, Gal. iv. 8. where the Apostle tells the believing Galatians, that, heretofore, when they were Gentiles, they *did service unto them, which by nature are no gods*; implying, that they were guilty of most gross and stupid idolatry in so doing: but, if Christ be not God by nature, either the Apostle commanded these believers to worship him, or not: if not, then they ought not to worship him; and very choice Christians they are, who should be driven to this: if he did, then he commanded them to be guilty of idolatry, like their former; for he tells them, they were idolaters, in worshipping those, who by nature are not gods.

And, that the owning of both natures in Christ is a Fundamental Article of Faith, appears,

1st. In that the denying of the Human Nature in Christ, is expressly sentenced as damnable.

1 John iv. 3. *Every spirit, that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, of which ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* The Apostle doth not say, “Every spirit, that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come into the world;” to prevent the evasion of those heretics, who pretended that he was revealed in the spirit, or in the conscience, or in the gospel: but he saith, *come in the flesh*, in the assumption of a true human nature: those, who deny this, are not of God. And,

2dly. For the denying of his Divine Nature, that also is in itself damnable.

1 John ii. 22. *He is Antichrist; that denieth the Father and the Son.* And, certainly, if it be so damnable a heresy to deny the Humanity of Christ, much more then his Divinity; for it was his divine nature, that put worth and value into all the

actions and sufferings of his human, and made them truly meritorious: and, therefore, if there be no salvation attainable, but through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ; they are utterly excluded from all possibility of being saved, who destroy the very belief of those merits through which alone they can be saved.

That is, therefore, another Fundamental Truth of the Gospel.

[3] Justification, in a free gratuitous way, in opposition to the works of the Law, is a Fundamental Article of our Faith.

In confirming this, the Apostle spends eleven whole chapters in his Epistle to the Romans. The denying of this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with a state of salvation. See, for this, Gal. v. 4. *Whosoever of you are justified by the Law, Christ is become of no effect unto you: ye are fallen from grace.* Indeed, many learned men are at variance concerning the manner of obtaining Justification by the righteousness of Christ; some taking one way and some another, and it is no easy matter to reconcile and accommodate them: but, so long as they hold this foundation, that none can be accepted of God, but only through the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ; though some may build hay or stubble upon this foundation, they may be safe, though they suffer loss in their superstructure. Only to me, that seems the best and safest way, which makes most for the honour of our Lord Christ; for we cannot easily err in ascribing too much unto him, who is the Author of our Salvation: and therefore, certainly, to make the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ the very matter of our Justification, and the imputation of them to us the formal cause of it, seems more honourable to him, and, I think, more consonant unto Scripture, than only to make it a remote procatactical cause, moving God to accept of our faith and obedience, as our righteousness, and thereupon to justify us.

[4] The doctrine of Sanctification, and of the absolute necessity of a thorough Change and Renovation of our Natures, is a Fundamental Truth, without the acknowledging of which, we can never be saved.

For our Saviour hath told us, John iii. 5. *Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And, certainly, if our undergoing of such a thorough and universal change be of such absolute necessity, the knowing and believing of it must needs be; for, if we believe it not necessary, we shall never be engaged heartily to endeavour it. And, therefore,

[5] The doctrine of our Fall, the knowledge of our lost estate and condition, is of indispensible necessity to eternal salvation.

Our Saviour tells us, that he came *to seek and to save* those *that are lost* : Luke xix. 10 : and unless we are conscious of our sin, and misery by reason of sin ; that we stand forfeited to the divine justice, liable to his severest wrath, exposed to all the dreadful curses of the Law ; we shall never submit to the methods of our physician, when we are not sensible of our disease.

[6] The doctrines of the Resurrection, Judgment to come, Heaven and Hell, and eternal Rewards approporioned to our present works ; these are Fundamental Articles, and of absolute necessity to be believed.

For he, who shall deny these, destroys all hopes and fears ; and turns himself loose to follow his own lusts, without any check or controul. He cannot be in a possibility of salvation, who believeth none ; who expects nothing at God's hands, whether rewards or punishments. For such a damnable doctrine as this, will necessarily engage him in a wicked and profligate life : in this our corrupt estate, wherein we are so naturally prone to sin, it is impossible that men should be holy *gratis*. Besides, it plucks up all religion by the very roots ; and the whole doctrine of Christ falls to the ground, if the immortality of the soul, future judgment, and eternal rewards, be once denied : for both our religion, and all religions in the world, are founded upon these principles.

Thus you see some of those Fundamental Truths, which are necessary to salvation. And, therefore, though heresy look not so foul and ugly, as some vile and scandalous impieties in life and practice ; and we are apt to have good opinions of men, whatsoever they hold, if so be we see them just and honest in their dealings, sober and temperate in their converse ; though we think it no great matter what their notions and tenets be, so long as their lives are blameless and inoffensive : yet, believe it, heresy is altogether as damnable as profaneness : those poisons are as deadly, which work upon the head ; as those, which work upon the heart : and we ought as much to shun a heretic, and to refuse converse with him, as a wicked monster ; as we ought to shun a murderer, a thief, a drunkard, an unclean sensualist, or the vilest sinner that can be named : yes, and rather more, inasmuch as there is more danger of being corrupted by the

fair speeches of erroneous persons, than there is of being enticed by the lewd and hateful actions of notorious and debauched wretches: and therefore St. John gives us this command, in his Second Epistle, v. 10, 11. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed: For he, that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.*

And, thus much, for Doctrinal Principles.

But, then,

(2) There are Practical Principles of Truth, whose immediate influence is only to guide the life and conversation.

Many such there are, which I shall only reckon to you in the heap: That the word of God is the best rule of life: that godliness is the greatest gain: that sin is the worst of evils: that God, in Christ, is the chief good: that a holy life is the securest and sweetest: that we ought to look only to duty, and leave successes to God: that the best peace is peace of conscience: that self-denial is the greatest self-interest: that we ought to choose the greatest affliction, rather than to commit the least sin: that whatsoever we lay out or lose for Christ, shall be repaid us with abundant use and advantage. These, and many other such like, are Practical Truths; which, unless we are fully persuaded and convinced of them in our own consciences, will never be able to influence and govern our lives and actions. And, unless we live according to such rules as these, it is utterly impossible, that ever we should be saved.

And thus I have shewed you, what are the Principles of Truth which *accompany salvation.*

2. The Second Enquiry was, How we shall know, whether these Principles, both Doctrinal and Practical, *are embraced by us in such a way, as may give us good hopes, that we are in a State of Salvation.*

Indeed, it is not enough merely to know these things, or to believe that they are great and precious truths: for there are not many, who have lived long under the dispensation of the Gospel, but have gotten a notion of these things, and their very reason forceth them to subscribe to the truth of them: but

yet we see that multitudes, even of these, are profane and impious; and such ungodly persons, that, as the Psalmist speaks, *salvation is far from them*.

Therefore I answer,

(1) Then these principles are things accompanying salvation, when they are Leading Principles.

When a man sails by this compass, and steers his course according to them: when they lie not floating and swimming in the brain; but soak and sink into the heart, and influence the life.

(2) When they are Determining and Conquering Principles.

When Christ and our interest come into competition, then see what thou art determined by. A carnal man may discourse by Scripture principles: but, when a time of trial and temptation comes, and he and Christ must part or he and the world must part, he then determines his choice by worldly principles; and, whatever he had speculatively talked before of preferring the peace and purity of conscience before all worldly enjoyments, yet now he chooseth sin rather than affliction.

(3) When they are Quieting Principles.

When they have determined your choice and then can satisfy and quiet your minds, then are they saving. It may be, that sometimes conscience hath well determined, and doth sway a man to a good choice: but yet he is angry with it; and could curse his conscience for being so tender, and forcing him to forego his earthly interests.

(4) When they are Fixed Principles; not only in the assent of the judgment, but in the consent of the will.

When they become habitual to us, and grow up in us as another nature: that, as the great natural principle of all our natural actions, is self-preservation; so the great swaying principle of all our actions, is these holy maxims, which naturally lead us to the preservation of that, which is our dearest self, even our precious souls and their eternal interests and concerns.

Thus we have shewn you the First sort of *things, that accompany salvation*: viz. the Principles of Belief, both Doctrinal and Practical: as, likewise, what is necessarily required to make these principles Saving.

ii. Let us now proceed to the Second General Head: To

consider THOSE IMPRESSIONS, WHICH MUST BE WROUGHT UPON THE HEART, WILL, AND AFFECTIONS.

And, herein, I shall, as before, make these Two enquiries :

What those Impressions are, *that accompany salvation.*

And,

What are the Evidences, by which we know them to be Saving.

1. *What these Impressions are.*

(1) To this I answer, in the general, they are those habits of true and divine grace infused into the will and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby they are wholly renewed, and, of earthly and sensual, become heavenly and spiritual.

They do, indeed, comprehend all the lineaments and features of the image of God : so that, when we speak of the graces of faith, love, hope, patience, humility, self-denial, &c. these are those impressions and habits, wrought in the heart, *that accompany salvation* ; and the whole system and complexion of them taken together, is that, which the Scripture calls, the New Man, the New Creature, the Image of God, the Divine Nature, Conversion, Sanctification, Effectual Calling, and the like. And this great change must, of necessity, pass upon the soul, before it can be brought into a capacity of obtaining heaven and eternal salvation : for that God, whom the Prophet describes to be *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, will not certainly behold it in heaven, his own throne and palace : but, as all, who were unclean, and leprous, and ulcerated, were to be removed out of the camp of Israel, because God walked in the midst of it ; so shall all such spiritually unclean persons be excluded out of heaven, the palace of the Great King, the camp of innumerable hosts of angels, in the midst of whom the Holy God walks, and converses only with pure and holy spirits.

These holy habits of grace, which are infused into the soul in its new birth and renovation, *accompany salvation* Two ways :

As Preparations unto it.

As Parts of it.

[1] As Preparations to it.

For, as God hath prepared an inheritance of glory for us, hereafter ; so, by grace, he prepares us for that inheritance. And therefore the Apostle, Col. i. 12. gives thanks to God, who *hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

And this meetness is Twofold :

1st. In the Nature of the thing.

Holiness is naturally required unto eternal happiness. As all the goodness of fruits and flowers must first spring from some seminal virtue ; so glory springs from grace, salvation from conversion, as the flower from the seed. Whence the Psalmist expresseth it, *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*: Ps. xcvi. 11. And, as naturally as a small seed, when it is received into good ground and watered with the dew and refreshing showers of heaven, sprouts up, and spreads itself into the beauties of a flower ; so this seed of grace, when it is watered with the dew of heaven and called forth by the quickening influences of the Spirit of God, begins to bud forth, spreads its branches, and will at last display all its glories when it is perfect and consummate in heaven. And,

2dly. By the Divine Appointment.

God hath, by his promises, entailed happiness and salvation upon the graces and holiness of his saints. It is a reward due unto them, by virtue of his promise and covenant. So that they are meet to be partakers of this inheritance ; not only because grace doth naturally tend to glory, as naturally as the dawning of the morn tends to a noon-day brightness ; but because also it is a meet and just thing with God, to recompense unto them joy and refreshing and everlasting peace and bliss, having obliged himself so to do by the tenor of his unalterable word of promise.

And, as holiness is thus preparatory to salvation, so,

[2] It is Part of salvation.

It is happiness, in this vale of misery : it is heaven, on this side heaven. Grace and glory differ not in nature, but only in degrees : grace is glory begun ; and glory is but grace elevated to its acme and perfection. St. John, in his First Epistle, ch. iii. v. 2. tells us, that all we can know of the state of glory, is, that *we shall be like God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.* And this resemblance unto God, the saints do here, in some measure, bear upon them : there are some strictures, some lineaments and proportions, of their Father's image, drawn upon them : and, as the clear and immediate vision of God in heaven is a transforming vision, where, by the bright reflections of God's purity and holiness cast upon

the blessed, they are made perfectly holy, and therefore blessed; so, here on earth, those more obscure and glimmering discoveries, which God vouchsafeth of himself, when he passeth before them in his ordinances, though they see him but darkly through a glass, yet even this sight of God is also transforming, and changeth the soul into the likeness and image of God; as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We.....beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.....as by the Spirit of the Lord.* So that, you see, there is very little difference, between our present state of grace and our future state of glory, but only in degrees and measures. St. John speaks of it as the glory of heaven, that we shall see God: St. Paul tells us, that we do now see him, though more dimly and obscurely. St. John tells us, that the glory of heaven consists, not only in seeing God, but in being made like unto him: St. Paul, that the sight of the glory of God doth now transform us, and make us like unto him, for we *are changed into the same image from glory to glory*: i. e. from one degree of grace to another.

Thus I have shewn you how these impressions and habits do *accompany salvation*, both as they are Preparations unto it and Parts of it.

(2) And now, though this be most true, in the general, concerning all the graces of God's Spirit, that they do thus naturally and necessarily *accompany salvation*; yet give me leave to single out some few of the more choice and eminent ones, upon which the Scripture seems to set a peculiar remark. For, though all the graces of the Holy Ghost are alike necessary to salvation, yet they are not alike eminent and conspicuous.

Now with divers of these, that most excellent Sermon of our Saviour upon the Mount will furnish us.

Therefore,

[1] Inward Heart-Holiness is a gracious disposition of soul, that doth accompany salvation.

So we have it, Mat. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* Now as all holiness signifies nothing else, but a separation from profane uses, to the service of God; so this holiness of the heart is the alienation and separation of it from sin, to the service of God. The Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1. distinguisheth sins into two sorts: there are filthinesses *of the flesh*; and such are those wherein the body is engaged; as

drunkenness, riot, uncleanness, murder, oaths, and blasphemies, &c. which require the service of the body as the instrument to perpetrate them: and there are other filthinesses *of the spirit*; and those are more refined and invisible, though not less pernicious and damnable sins; and such are wicked thoughts, evil concupiscences and desires, atheism, unbelief, hypocrisy, and the like: the former sort are the sins of lewd and profligate wretches; these latter are the sins, in which formal hypocrites, and all those who are devoid of the power and life of true godliness, may indulge themselves, though they carry a fair shew and outside to the world. Now examine yourselves: of which kind is your holiness and sanctity? Do not content yourselves that you are pure and clean from the gross and scandalous acts of sin? that you are no drunkards, nor swearers, nor adulterers, nor murderers, nor thieves, nor extortioners? it were to be wished that more could say, they have washed their hands in innocency from these wickednesses. But do you rest in this only; and look no farther, than that your lives and outward demeanour be fair and inoffensive; when, all the while, these and many other swarms of lusts crowd thick about your heart, and cluster there? Though thou never embrewedst thy hands in the blood of thy brother; yet dost thou harbour any malicious and revengeful thoughts against him? dost thou please and delight thyself in wishing and fancying his ruin, and rejoicest in his sufferings? Though thou never spokest a blasphemous word against God and his truth; yet is it the employment of thy mind, to rend God's attributes from him, and to tear them off one by one, sometimes denying his wisdom, sometimes his power, sometimes his goodness, sometimes his providence, and sometimes, with the fool, denying the very being and essence of God itself? is this the sport and recreation of thy mind, thus speculatively to assassinate the Great God? Darest thou prostitute thy soul to the embraces of any unclean and impure thoughts, and stuprate the images of thine own fancy? Is thy heart vain, worldly, sensual; or dost thou suffer unclean, covetous, and revengeful thoughts to estuate there without controul? Believe it, though thy life were as clear and spotless as an angel's, yet this impurity and filthiness of thy heart will keep thee for ever from the beatifical vision of God: for that God, who sees all the inward and lurking filthiness of thy heart as apparently as if every thought and motion of thy soul were

written on thy forehead, hath sentenced thee that thou shalt never see him. It may be, thou darest not outwardly commit those wickednesses, which thy heart prompts thee to, for fear of punishment or shame; but God hath no interest at all in these restraints: if thou fearedst him, thou wouldst no more harbour any abomination in thy heart, than thou wouldst visibly act it in thy life; for God sees every flushing of thy thoughts and of thy desires, as clearly as he doth the most public and conspicuous actions of thy life: it is not therefore for his sake, that thou art not notoriously and infamously wicked; but for thine own: thou compoundest between thy reputation and the temptation: to satisfy thy credit, thou darest not commit the sin; and yet, to satisfy the Devil, thou wilt inwardly harbour and cherish it: and, believe it, he is well enough content that thou shouldst thus compromise; knowing, that such repercussives will never cure the disease, but only drive it to the heart; and so that he may rule that, he will let thy credit or safety rule thy life. But, a true Christian rests not contented with this external sanctification; that he hath beaten sin within its trenches; that he lays a close siege to it, and keeps it from foraging abroad: but he especially labours with his heart; knowing, that it is but in vain to lade out the streams, unless he can withal dry up the fountain: and, if he sees but the least stirring of any evil thought, the least breathing of any sinful desire, he presently endeavours to suppress it; knowing, that if he can but keep his heart pure, his life will be pure by consequence. And this Inward Purity is that, which is an infallible concomitant of salvation. Indeed, he cannot altogether keep himself from the mutinies and rebellions of his corrupt part: his thoughts and his affections will sometimes make an insurrection, and buzz strange things to him; and sometimes also the Devil casts in a fiery dart, some black and hideous suggestion, and that Old Serpent seems audibly to hiss within him: but, then, first, it is the grief and anguish of his soul when it is thus within him; he could even shake off his very being, and run away from himself, to be freed from them: and, secondly, he labours to the very utmost of his power to quell these rebellious motions; he commands his thoughts never again to propose such matters to him, turns away in indignation from hearkening to their overtures; and, as other commanders use to do with seditious and mutinous armies, presently busies them about other work and employ-

ment. Whereas, on the contrary, a wicked man diverts and recreates himself with all the filthy dalliances of his impure thoughts, sets up a theatre in his imagination, brings forth every lust to act its part, sports himself with them: and, when he hath done, applauds himself in the secrecy of his invention; that he can be a spectator, where none can behold him; and enjoy both his own lusts and other men's esteem, without ever considering that the all-seeing eye of God is upon him, of that God, who will draw the curtain, detect the scene, and openly expose all his secret sins to everlasting shame and reproach.

That is the First thing.

[2] Poverty of Spirit is another grace, which *accompanies salvation.*

Mat. v. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And what a rich portion, what a glorious inheritance is this, for those, who are thus poor! There is, indeed, a spiritual poverty, which is far from having a blessing annexed to it: such was that of the Church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. *And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:* this spiritual poverty is always joined with ignorance and presumption; and those, who are most indigent and necessitous, usually flatter themselves with proud conceits of their fulness and abundance. But this blessed poverty of spirit is that grace, whereby a man is convinced of his wants, and mourns under them; sees his own emptiness and vileness, and loaths himself for it; and, therefore, continually renounceth himself in all that is really virtuous and commendable in him, and daily prays that his own righteousness may not damn him: he maintains the performance, but abjures the merit of good works: he trusts not to his duties, but dares not neglect them: he knows they are but as broken reeds; and that, therefore, though he must walk with them in his hand to point him out the way unto heaven, yet he must not lean upon them: he is continually in want, and still complaining and craving: he sees nothing in himself but wants; want of wisdom, want of grace, want of holiness, want of comfort and assurance: ever since the strong man was cast out and his goods spoiled, he hath lived in great want and necessity; and therefore is a most constant and importunate beggar at the Throne of Grace for supply; and makes out to the fulness and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, as his only relief; and whatsoever he finds defective in himself, fetcheth it home by an appropriating faith from him. This poverty of spirit

is a most excellent grace, which puts the crown wholly upon God's mercy; ascribing nothing to itself, but its own failings: and is such a sweet, ingenuous, and obliging grace, that it wins favour in the sight of God; and he will certainly crown it, at the last, with glory: this, above all others, hath learnt the true art of ingratiating itself with God; while those, who are spiritually proud and haughty and self-confident, are like your great mountains, high but barren; they are swollen up with their own arrogance, but are usually empty of every thing but only noise and tumour.

[3] A Mourning Frame of Spirit is another disposition, which *accompanies salvation*.

Mat. v. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*: a holy mourning, for our own sins, and for the sins of others.

1st. For our own sins.

And this is one great part of repentance; without which, no remission can be granted, and therefore no salvation be obtained. It is true, repentance is no satisfaction to the justice of God: we cannot weep ourselves out of debt: were our heads *fountains of tears*, and could our eyes pour out *rivers of water*, yet all these could not wash away the guilt or stain of any the least sin, that ever we committed. But yet, without this, the satisfaction, which Christ Jesus hath made, can never be applied to us: for his blood comes flowing to us, only upon a stream of our own tears: and that soul, which can thus melt down before the Lord in a holy, ingenuous mourning, and godly sorrow, may, with comfortable evidence conclude, that, as he hath bathed himself in his own tears, so God hath sprinkled him with the blood of Christ, which alone can take away sin. And,

2dly. A spirit of mourning for the sins of others; the sins of the times and places, in which we live.

For, as our own sins lie upon us, till we humble our souls before God: so the guilt of other men's sins will likewise be imputed unto us, and the wrath which is due to them may fall upon us; unless we lament them before God, and testify, by our sorrow for them, that we gave not our consent to them.

This is another gracious impression, which accompanies salvation.

[4] Another is a Meek and a Patient Spirit.

Matth. v. 5. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*: where the promise, I suppose, doth not only refer to temporal blessings, though they only are expressed; but is

to be carried higher, unto the heavenly inheritance. Now this meekness is a fruit of holy mourning: he, who deeply humbles himself for his sins before God, will not be much exasperated by the offences of others against him: if God hath forgiven him ten thousand talents, he will not think it any great matter to forgive his brother a few pence. Nothing makes a man so untractable and rugged, as sin, that lies upon the conscience unrepented, and therefore unpardoned. And therefore we find that David was never so cruel, as when he had for some time lain under the guilt of his two foul sins: then, he puts the Ammonites *under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and makes them pass through the brick-kiln*: a fearful and sad havoc! some he burnt, and some he sawed, and some he tore in pieces; which was a strange execution, and possibly more than became him to inflict. But, afterward, when he had truly repented and deeply humbled himself for his sins, though he had a far greater provocation, yet he meekly passeth it by; and when Shimei, in the madness and distraction of his rage, pelts him with stones and curses together, repentance has so humbled and tamed his spirit, that all we now hear from him, is, *Let him curse*: for God hath said unto him, *Curse David*. It is a most beautiful and excellent grace, when we can bear affronts and injuries petulantly done against us, without any great disturbance and emotion. And this grace God hath promised to crown with salvation: Ps. cxlix. 4. *He will beautify the meek with salvation.*

[5] A holy Hungering and Thirsting after Grace.

Mat. v. 6. *Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*: when we do earnestly desire, both the righteousness of Christ's Merits to justify us, and the righteousness of his Spirit to sanctify us: which vehement appetite will arise in us, if we have but a deep sense of our want of Christ and our want of grace. And, certainly, the infinite mercy of God will not suffer him to refuse the breathings of a heart, that thus amorously pants after him: but he will, according to his promise, fill *the hungry with good things*; when, as for *the rich* and the full, those that are full of self and full of pride, he will send them *empty away*.

Again,

[6] A Merciful Frame of Spirit.

Verse 7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*: when we are merciful, both to the souls and bodies of others;

shewing our prone and ready charity, both in instructing the one, and in relieving and supplying the other.

Again,

[7] A holy Awe and Dread of God, is another grace that *accompanies salvation*.

This, possibly, is looked upon by some, now-a-days, as a mean grace; unworthy of that near relation in which we stand to God, and that freedom which we may use towards him: but, yet, the Scripture doth lay so much emphasis upon this, that it often sets forth the whole work of grace upon the soul, by the fearing of God.

[8] So, also, Love to God, Love to his People, Love to his Ways and Ordinances, and whatsoever bears the stamp of his holiness printed upon it.

These, and many more, are such holy impressions upon the heart, that, wheresoever they are truly to be found, they are most certain evidences of a state of salvation, and do always infallibly accompany it.

Thus much, for the First Enquiry.

2. The Second Enquiry is: "If I find any such like impressions upon my heart, as these, *how shall I certainly know whether they are such as accompany salvation?* for there is abundance of counterfeit grace abroad in the world: how then shall we discover what is true and genuine from what is false and spurious?"

I answer,

(1) These impressions are then saving, when they are Social: when they accompany one another, then do they likewise *accompany salvation*.

Many, possibly, will pretend to high raptures, and some kind of ecstatic efforts of their love to God: many will boast much of their overflowing joys, that their souls are even distended with comforts, and as full of peace and satisfaction as they can hold: many may, possibly, be as confident of their election, as if God had unclasped the Book of Life to them, turned them to the very page and line, and shewed them their names written there from all eternity. But, if you would not be deluded, be sure you look how these things are accompanied in you. If ever your love cast out a holy and filial fear of God; or your confidence and rejoicing supplant a holy trembling before him: if your assurance scorn poverty of spirit,

meekness and a holy mourning, as too mean and too poor associates; if your faith reject good works, as too legal; or your works supersede faith, as unnecessary: believe it, these are not *things that accompany salvation* in you; but they are glaring delusions of the Devil, who hath transformed himself into an angel of light, to impose false hopes and deceitful confidences upon you. When they are separated one from another, they are separated from salvation.

(2) They are then saving, when they are grown as it were Natural to us, and make up a Frame of Spirit.

That man cannot safely conclude that he is in a state of salvation, who only now and then feels some violent impulses and passionate motions towards that which is holy: for men may hurry apace at first setting out, but then they quickly tire. But, where grace is true and genuine, there it is ordinarily digested and turned into our very nature; so that it will, in some sort, be as natural to us to serve and please God, as ever formerly it was too natural to us to sin against and provoke him. Indeed, the very best are subject to much instability: many times, it is with them as with the sea, the highest spring-tides have the lowest ebbs: sometimes, their souls are like the chariots of Aminadab; and, anon, they drive on heavily: but then they are sensible of their abatement, fluxes, and changes; and, when they cannot find that vivacity and quickness of spirit which sometimes carried them forth in the performance of duties, they mourn under their present dulness and stupidity, and endeavour again to recover their former excellency.

(3) Where these impressions are saving, they are Thriving and Improving.

The light of the righteous is as the dawn, that waxeth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Declining Christians have great reason to suspect themselves: and, if they quickly repent not, and recover themselves to their pristine state, and do their first works with their first zeal and alacrity, they may sadly suspect that their graces are not true; for growth in grace is the best evidence of truth of grace. Indeed, in young converts there may be a great deal of heat and fervour, which afterwards, when they are more established Christians, may abate; and they may think this a decay in their graces, when indeed it is not. For we must distinguish, between a passionate love of God, and a sedate, serene love of God. Our passions do, in our first conversion, mingle more with our graces, than after-

wards; and then we are like a torrent, very swift and rapid, but neither so deep nor so strong. And, as little brooks and torrents, though they run very fiercely, yet stop, and purle, and murmur at every small pebble that lies in their way; but great rivers, which seem to move with a slow and grave pace, yet bear down all mounds and dams, and whatsoever is in their way to oppose their passage: so is it here: grave and settled Christians may seem to move more slowly, without any noise or tumult; but they have a great depth and strength in them, and are able to bear down before them those temptations and oppositions, at which young novices, who are more fierce and noisy, are forced to stop, complain, and murmur. And we must estimate the growth of our graces, not only, nor indeed so much, by the violence of its efforts, as its prevalency and effectualness, which proceeds from its being more radical and habitual in us.

We have thus dispatched the First Two General Heads.

iii. The Third remains to be yet considered: and that is, A REGULAR OBEDIENCE, IN THE WHOLE COURSE OF OUR LIVES AND CONVERSATIONS.

The course of a man's life and actions is often, in Scripture, said to be his Way: and, certainly, such different ends as heaven and hell cannot but have as different ways to lead to them. That there is a peculiar way of salvation the very Devil acknowledgeth, Acts xvi. 17. where the Pythoness, or possessed damsel, cried after Paul and the disciples, *These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.* Now here let us enquire,

What this way is.

How it may be known whether we walk in a saving way, or no.

1. *What this way of salvation is.*

I answer: The Scripture hath given us many characters and descriptions of it. And, as those, who direct us in a road which we have not travelled, tell us what marks we shall find in it; so the Spirit of God hath set down in his Word many observable marks, which we shall meet with in this *Via Regia*, the highway that leads to the New Jerusalem, the City of the Living God.

I shall only indigitate some of the most eminent and conspicuous.

(1) It is a Way of Holiness.

Isaiah xxxv. 8. *And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called, The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it.* This way, though it be full of briars and thorns; and those, who pass through it, must expect to encounter with many sharp tribulations, which will pierce them to the quick, and draw tears from their eyes and blood from their hearts: yet it is a way, that hath no mire nor filth in it; a clean way, wholly separated from the defilements and pollutions of the world. Holiness is the proper badge and cognizance of all those, who are in a state of salvation. The sentence is irreversibly passed, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Sin and the curse are inseparably linked together; so that he, who leads a wicked, impure life, must needs be a miserable, damned wretch, though God should not put forth his almighty power to destroy him: his very guilt would be his hell; and his crime, his punishment. As it would be inconsistent with the justice of God, not to punish an incorrigible sinner; so it is inconsistent, in the nature of the thing, that such an one should be otherwise than miserable: that habitual pravity, which is rooted and confirmed in him by many repeated acts of wickedness, renders him as necessarily and as fatally wretched, as the dreadful, but righteous judgment of God: nor is it a thing possible in nature, that such an one should escape hell, who carries so much, nay the worst part of it about him; malice, rancour, enmity against God and goodness; and who expresses, in his actions, the same things that are done in hell itself. So, on the contrary, a holy life doth, by a natural-consequence, infer blessedness: since it is not only inconsistent with the righteousness and veracity of God, but with the nature of the thing, that those ways should not end in salvation, which have so much of salvation in them; that those should not lead to heaven, which represent the choicest excellencies and perfections of heaven, viz. purity and holiness, which indeed are more genuine and noble parts of true happiness, than all those additional glories, which we expect besides. What is a holy life, but a life resembling the life of God; when we keep ourselves from all gross and scandalous sins, and indulge ourselves in none; but, with the greatest care and conscience, endeavour to regulate our actions according to the will of God? And, certainly, wheresoever this purity is to be found, it is an infallible companion of salvation; for God will never condemn his own likeness: his justice will never punish his holiness; for it is the holiness of God, that shines forth in the conversation of

a true Christian. And those, who thus live the life of God here on earth, in their graces, shall have this life perpetuated to them, and for ever live with God in glory.

(2) It is a Strait and Narrow Way.

Matth. vii. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.* It is strongly fenced in with the authority of the Divine Law and Commands; so that we cannot turn aside either to the right-hand or to the left, without committing a trespass. Indeed, the Psalmist tells us, Ps. cxix. 96. that God's commandments are *exceeding broad*: how then is the way of salvation thus strait and narrow? I answer: They are, indeed, exceeding broad, as to the comprehensiveness of their obligation; but, yet, exceeding narrow, in respect of any latitude of allowance or indulgence: they are exceeding broad, in prescribing us our duty, and so large in this, that they extend, either directly or by consequence, to every action of our lives, yea to every cogitation of our hearts; but they are exceeding narrow, in giving us any scope or licence, any permission or liberty, to walk after our own desires and inclinations. Now, O Christians! what kind of life is that, which you lead? is it a strict and accurate life; a life, shut up within the compass of God's laws? dare you not grant yourselves those allowances, which most men in the world take to themselves? This is an evidence, that you indeed walk in that way, which leads to the heavenly city, the palace of the Great King, when your path is thus enclosed, and all that you do circumscribed and bounded in by the will and word of God. Thus to keep our eye upon our rule, and to direct our lives according to these Three Maxims:

That things forbidden must of necessity be eschewed:

That things commanded must of necessity be performed:

That things neither forbidden nor commanded, may yet have their circumstances so determined, that either we may be obliged to perform, or to eschew them:

When, I say, we direct our lives and actions according to these Three Principles, doubtless we may conclude, that we are in the safe and strait way to heaven; when we are hedged in so close on every side, that we dare not, we cannot, take that scope and liberty to fly out and range, which too many do.

(3) And, because it is so strait and narrow a Way, therefore is it so Unfrequented. *Few there be that find it, and fewer that walk in it.*

Thou mayst almost know it, by the few tracts that are to be found in it. Indeed, a Christian's life is a singular life. Not that he is a man of singular and unusual notions; or of singular and affected phrases and expressions; or of singular form and mode of religion: these things have deluded many, and made them believe that they are in the way of salvation, only because they choose out by-paths of their own to walk in; whereas we know that bats and owls, and all the impure birds of the night, make their solitary flights in deserts and wildernesses. But the singularity of a true Christian consists only in his exact and critical obedience: he is the only man, who walks by rule; when the rest of the world walk after their own lusts: he differs from others, only because they differ from God: he conforms not to the customs and practices of men, only in those things wherein they contradict the commands of God: he affects no way, merely because it is solitary and untrodden; but would rather, if it might be, go to heaven, as David desired to go to the sanctuary, with a multitude, than single and alone: but, yet, because the way of salvation is so generally baulked, and few there are who can be persuaded to decline the broad way that seems all strewed with roses, and tempts with all the alluring charms that may bewitch the senses; therefore, rather than perish with them, he is forced to forsake their ways: he dares not be a partaker of their sins, lest he partake of their plagues; well knowing, that, if he lie in the same wickedness with the rest of the world, he must for ever lie in the same torments with them. Now, O Christian! consider your ways: dost thou not see what an universal sway and empire vice hath gotten in the world? profaneness and impiety have overflowed it, and covered the whole face of it, as the waters cover the sea; so that there is scarce room left for innocency to rest the sole of her foot in: *Through swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break forth until blood toucheth blood:* how many swinish drunkards are there, wallowing in their own vomit! how many goutish sensualists are become brutish in their filthy lusts! how many earth-worms are there, crawling up and down in the muck of the world, and loading themselves with thick clay! Now, is your way the way of these ungodly sinners? can you drink with the drunkard, and blaspheme with the swearer, and lie and steal, and commit all manner of abominations and filthiness, which you see patterns and examples of abroad? Is this the way of salvation? or, while you accompany

them in their wickedness, can you think you have those *things* in you *that accompany salvation*? What! shall all the world then be saved; and no distinction made, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not; between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath? must heaven then be laid open in common for all intruders; and nothing more be required to have right to that eternal inheritance, but only confidently and presumptuously to hope for it? are such wicked and impure wretches likely to be of the number of those few, who shall enter in at the strait gate? of that little flock, for whom the kingdom is prepared? Never deceive yourselves: salvation is not attainable upon such terms: God will maintain heaven against you, so long as there is one curse to discharge at you: and, believe it, while you live as the most live, lewdly, profanely, carelessly, in the practice of known impieties, and the prosecution of your sensual lusts; you must also perish as the most do, eternally and irremediably.

(4) The way of salvation, is a Way of Universal and Unreserved Obedience.

Indeed, under the first Covenant of Works, our perfect legal obedience was required as the condition of the continuance of that blessed and happy estate: an obedience, absolutely perfect both in parts and degrees, fully extended to the utmost latitude of God's commands, and commensurate to the farthest bounds of duty; and wound up to the greatest intenseness of love and delight in performing it. But we are fallen from all possibility of living in this consummate obedience to the will of God: and therefore now, under the Covenant of Grace, God requires from us obedience, as a necessary concomitant of salvation, not legally but evangelically perfect; which he is pleased then to account such, when we endeavour to the utmost to fulfil the whole Law, and to please him in all things. If we unfeignedly desire to submit our souls unto the authority of God's commands in all things, without excepting or reserving to ourselves any beloved or darling lust, this is such a course of life as doth infallibly *accompany salvation*: and, though it be likewise accompanied with many inevitable failings and infirmities, yet these should only cause us to walk the more cautiously and mournfully, but not despondently; for such an universal obedience as this shall not fail of its acceptation and reward: Ps. lxxix. 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.* The whole Law is contained in two things:

the duties, which immediately concern God; and those, which immediately concern men: and that obedience, which is saving, will equally respect both. Now examine what is the course of thy life. What is thy religion towards God? is not the most, that can be said of thee, peaceableness and good neighbourhood? is it not the best character, which can be given of thee, that thou art a quiet, friendly man? Or, if thou hast taken up a splendid profession, and art frequent in the duties of God's worship, what is thy demeanour towards Men? art thou not turbulent, proud, heady, disobedient and untractable, unjust and oppressive, self-seeking, greedy and covetous? If thou art defective either in the one or in the other, and dost not to the utmost endeavour to keep a good conscience *void of offence both toward God and toward men*, let me tell thee, that all thou gloriest in, or trustest unto, is far from being that true and genuine obedience, which God requires from those whom he intends to save. If thou indulgest thyself in the neglect of any one known duty, or in the commission of any one known sin, nothing of all that thou hast done is such as doth *accompany salvation*, or will ever bring thee unto it: for he that thus offends in one particular, though the command be never so contrary to his humour, interest, and inclination, *is guilty of all*: James ii. 10, 11.

(5) The way of salvation is a Way of Truth.

Psal. lxxix. 30. *I have chosen the way of truth.*

[1] Of truth, in opposition to Lying.

Psal. lxxix. 29. *Remove from me the way of lying.* For, into the New Jerusalem *shall in no wise enter...whatsoever defileth...or maketh a lie*: Rev. xxi. 27: and, *without are dogs...and whoremongers, and murderers...and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*: Rev. xxii. 15.

[2] Of truth, in opposition to Error.

The Apostle speaks very dreadfully concerning some, whom God should give up to strong delusions, *that they should believe a lie: That they might be damned, who believed not the truth*: 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. And,

[3] Of truth, in opposition to Rottenness and Unsincerity.

Then is your way the way of truth, when you direct the main course of all your actions, so that the glory of God may be advanced by them: when you do them, not to be seen or applauded of men, but to be accepted of God; and would still persevere to do your duty, though all the world should decry

and condemn it: this is the way of truth, and of salvation. Whereas the hypocrite is only so far good, as others will countenance him: he is only good, in good times: and, though he accompanies them that are going towards salvation, and his duties may seem to keep pace with theirs, and his life to be as strict and exemplary as theirs; yet, believe it, theirs shall be rewarded, when his shall be exploded, as being performed in the falsehood and dissimulation of his heart, and done rather to men than to God.

And, thus, I have shewn you what this Way and this Life is, that doth *accompany salvation*. It is a Way of Holiness, a Strait and Narrow Way, a Singular and Unfrequented Way, a Way of Universal and Unreserved Obedience, and a Way of Truth and Uprightness: which way, if it be ours, will infallibly bring us to the possession and enjoyment of that happiness and glory, which are laid up for us in heaven.

2. The Second Enquiry was, *How we may know whether we walk in this saving way, or no.*

And to this, all, that I have said before in describing this way, may well be recollected as an answer. And, therefore, I I shall but add a word or two more.

(1) It is an evidence that this way shall be saving to thee, when it is the way of thy Choice.

Psal. cxix. 173. *I have chosen thy precepts.* When you take not up your course of life, only by imitation, or tradition, or upon compulsion. For many there are, who may walk in a right way, but not with a right heart: and may serve God, not for God's sake, but because they see that such and such duties have been customarily performed in their families and by their ancestors, time out of mind; and so they keep up the same as a relic of antiquity, rather than a piece of devotion; and bear the badge of their Christianity, only as they do their coat of arms, because derived down unto them by their ancestors.

(2) When thou walkest Uniformly in thy obedience, then is thy way and course of life such as accompanies salvation.

When thou art not pious only by fits and starts; but keepest an even and constant tenor and temper.

(3) When thou walkest Forward in these ways: when thou goest from strength to strength, still gaining ground towards heaven; and art nearer to salvation than when thou first be-

lievedst, not only in time and years, but in fitness and disposedness for it.

Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day:* while thou thus addest to thy *faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity;* one grace unto another, and to all thy graces farther measures and degrees of perfection; thou mayst be well assured, while these are in thee and abound, increasing with all the increases of God, that he will add glory to glory for thy reward, and that an abundant entrance shall be administered to thee into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:

To whom, with the Father, &c.

A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

FROM PROV. iii. 17.

HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE
PEACE.

WHOSOEVER would effectually plead the cause of piety and religion, must not only recommend the principles of it to the understanding, as most true and certain, but the practice of it to the will and affections, as desirable and delightful. For we find it verified by daily experience, that it is much easier to conquer the arguments of atheism, than the prejudices of profaneness: and, when we have mastered the judgment, to yield to the reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, and the infinite advantages of its rewards; yet still we must encounter with a strong reserve of prejudices and mistakes, ghastly spectres and hideous apparitions, which fright the will from embracing a religion, that is represented so dismal and unpleasant. Pleasure is so sweet and potent a charm, that neither reason nor rewards can prevail against the insinuations of it.

And therefore nothing would tend more to the advancement of true godliness, than if we could clearly demonstrate, that it hath not only the advantage above sin and vice, in respect of future and eternal joys, but in respect of present pleasure and satisfaction; and thereby convert temptation into motive, the snare of the Devil into a cord of love, and turn the most destructive engine of hell against its own gates. For, whilst men's minds are possessed with a false opinion, that the ways of virtue are all strewed with thorns and galthrops; that piety is a sour, ill-natured, tetrical thing, a sullen matron who enter-

tains her followers only upon sighs and tears, sad reflections and doleful regrets; that to obtain the joys of the next life, we must bid an everlasting adieu to the contents of this, and never more expect a cheerful hour, a clear day, or a bright thought to shine upon us: it will be utterly in vain to bring them tidings of the Heavenly Canaan, that *Land which floweth with milk and honey*; for the dread of these Anakims and fenced cities, will make them murmur against their guide, and resolve rather to die in Egypt.

I thought, therefore, that the best service I could do for religion would be, to pluck off this deformed visor, and to represent true piety and holiness in its genuine beauty and sweetness: and to convince the voluptuous world, that they woefully mistake in their estimate and pursuit of pleasure; that they seek the living among the dead; that they neglect the fountain of living waters, and seek for refreshment at those cisterns which hold no other but the tainted waters of Marah and Meribah, bitterness and strife.

To this end, I have chosen these words of the Wise Man: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

That relative particle, *her* ways, leads us back to the 13th verse: *Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom; and the man, that getteth understanding.* From whence he proceeds to demonstrate the happiness of this man, in the following verses, by the excellency of wisdom: vv. 14, 15. *She is more precious than rubies: and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her:* then, by the rewards of it, in three of the choicest blessings, which human nature doth most covet, Long Life, Riches, and Honour: *Length of days is in her right-hand; and, in her left-hand, riches and honour:* and, lastly, by the pleasantness of it, in the words of my text, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness.* So that, if life, if riches, if honour, if pleasure, if the confluence of all good, can make a man happy, he might well pronounce, *Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom.*

Well, but what is this wisdom, which is thus profitable, thus pleasant? Is it a subtle management of our own concerns, or a politic negotiating of the mighty affairs of states and kingdoms? Alas! the cares, perplexities, and disquiets, which attend these things, do evidently prove, that they are not *ways of pleasantness*: but, sometimes, unsafe; always, intricate and entangled. In a word, therefore, that wisdom, whose ways are *pleasantness*

and *peace*, is nothing else but true religion, solid piety and holiness: *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding*: Job xxviii. 28.

And therefore we find, that, throughout this whole Book of the Proverbs, wherein Solomon doth so often chastise the Fool, he means no other person but the wicked man. Wisdom and folly are synonymous terms with holiness and impiety; and do very well express them, both in their causes and their consequents: for, as folly is the cause of sin, and the consequents of sinning do very evidently prove them fools who commit it; so wisdom is the origin of piety, and the consequents of piety do clearly prove them wise who follow it.

So then you see, that these ways of wisdom, which are recommended to us as pleasant, are the fear of God, holiness, and true piety.

I know that this will seem a grievous paradox to as many as have not seen the beauty, nor tasted the sweetness of a holy life; but have degraded themselves to a brutish state, and have nothing left to relish pleasures but their senses: and yet even to such, (if their sensuality hath not quite extinguished their reason, and they have but understanding enough to name them men) I doubt not to prove, that the pleasures of a holy life are far more considerable than the pleasures of sin; and that the rigours and severities of it are less grievous, than the trouble and uneasiness of being wicked.

I. To this end I must first premise, that all PLEASURE ariseth from an attempered suitableness and harmony that there is between the faculty and the object. For, where there is any disagreement, either in contrariety or excess, the result is not pleasure, but torment. Light, when it is just proportioned to the strength of the eye, is the pleasure and beauty of the whole creation: *It is a pleasant thing*, saith Solomon, *to behold the light*. And sounds, when they are modelled to the capacity of the ear, cause a sweet melody and consent. And so it is, likewise, with all other objects: when they are adapted to the powers which are to receive them, pleasure and sweetness are the offspring. Now man is *Οργανον διχορδον*, “A two-stringed instrument:” his soul is one, and his body the other; and, as he receives smooth touches upon either, according to the various objects that are fitted to them, so spring up suavity and delight.

Now, here,

i. THE PLEASURES, WHICH RELIGION BRINGS, ARE NOT SUCH AS DO IMMEDIATELY AFFECT THE BODY, the drossy and earthy part of man.

It never spread the glutton's table, nor filled the drunkard's cup, nor was taster to either. These offices are too mean and sordid for it. And, if thou canst relish no other delights, go herd thyself among beasts. The dog and the swine are fit company, as well as comparisons, for thee; and thou wert made a man, a rational and intellectual creature, to no purpose, unless to be eternally punished: since the soul of a brute can as well taste the pleasures of sense, as thy immortal one.

But yet, if any think these such considerable delights, that they cannot easily forego them; let me add,

ii. That RELIGION AND PIETY, as it doth allow, so it ADDS A SWEETNESS AND RELISH TO THE LAWFUL COMFORTS OF THIS PRESENT LIFE, which debauchery and intemperance corrupt and vitiate.

Let me here boldly appeal to your experience, whether sobriety and temperance be not more true pleasure (I had almost said voluptuousness) than excess and riot. And, I dare say, that those, who come to their natural refreshments, and have Moderation both for their carver and their skinker, find a much better guest in their entertainment; than those, whose continued luxury, by seeking to please, only cloy and stupifies their senses. Besides, a constant fear of God and a conscientious obedience unto him, give such a seasoning to all our earthly enjoyments, that they are all received by us as expressions of his love and fatherly care towards us; which is such a pleasure, that excess and epicurism could never afford. A good conscience is a continual feast: and that poor Christian, who hath his dry morsel made savoury with *the Hidden Manna*, fares more deliciously every day than Dives himself; whose guilt not only poisons his dainties to his soul, but sours them to his palate! God is the great Householder of the World: we are all entertained as guests at his table, and his bounty provides for us: but, as the Wise Man saith, Prov. xv. 17. *Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is; than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith;* so, truly, where the love of God is enjoyed, the slenderest provision is far more sweet and comfortable, than the greatest variety of

delicates where the hatred and wrath of God mingle gall and wormwood with them. What pleasure can there be in any estate, where a man is not well pleased with himself? where guilt gnaws, and fears bode, and conscience brawls, as certainly they must do, more or less, in every wicked man? What more pleasure can he take in his possessions, than a wretched malefactor can in that prison-provision, which is allowed him to maintain his life, till he be dragged forth to execution?

But, though Godliness doth thus sweeten our outward state and condition, and is profitable for this present life; yet,

iii. The chief joys, which religion and piety give us, are INTERNAL and MENTAL; and those are incomparably beyond the delights of sense.

Even natural speculations have entertained inquisitive minds with such raptures, that some have been, as it were, wholly abstracted from the body; and have neither regarded pain nor pleasure of sense, whilst they have been employed about them. But, certainly, the joys of religion must needs be much more refined and spiritual, than those, which proceed only from a problem or demonstration of science.

II. Now this pure and spiritual pleasure ARISETH IN THE MIND FROM THREE THINGS:

The Conformity of pious actions to the Rules and Principles of right Reason.

The peaceable Reflections of a man's own Conscience upon them.

The Hope and Expectation of an eternal Reward.

i. There is A CONGRUITY AND SUITABLENESS IN HOLY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIONS, TO THE RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT REASON.

There are Three general principles of Natural Religion imprinted in the mind of every man, which are the dictates of pure and untainted reason.

That God is to be loved and feared above all, and the revelations of his will to be credited and obeyed.

That we ought to govern ourselves with all temperance and sobriety, in the use of the comforts of this life.

That we ought to demean ourselves towards others, with the exactest justice and equity; the true measure of which is, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye likewise unto them.*

This, indeed, is the sum of all religion: *To live*, as the Apostle declares it, *soberly, righteously, and godly*: *soberly*, in respect of ourselves; *righteously*, towards others; and *godly*, in the performance of those duties, which immediately concern the divine worship. And these are the general and primary dictates of right reason.

Now, as it is impossible, but that, where a suitable object strikes and affects the sense, there must arise sensual and corporeal delight and pleasure; so is it alike impossible, but that, where our actions do correspond with these principles of reason, there must arise an intellectual joy and complacency. No man ever took true joy and delight in doing that, which is unnatural: and, truly, every sin is, in a sense, unnatural, as it contradicts those principles of natural light and understanding, which God hath so deeply implanted in us, that they can never be totally rooted out. And therefore there must needs be jarring and discord in the mind of a wicked man, whose actions are contrary to those first principles of his reason, which he always opposeth, but can never overcome: and this, of necessity, must make his life very uneasy and uncomfortable. Whereas a holy man, who squares his actions according to his principles, finds such a just proportion between them, that there is no dissonance, no contest; but the sweet touches of them mutually, one upon the other, strike a perpetual harmony in his soul; and the result of this, must needs be peace and pleasure.

ii. Unspeakable pleasure must needs spring up in the soul, FROM THE COMFORTABLE REFLECTIONS OF OUR OWN CONSCIENCES UPON HOLY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIONS.

Be the difficulty of performing them never so great, yet this joy, which diffuseth itself in the heart after we have broken through all the reluctancies and oppositions that our corruptions, our sloth, or our worldly advantages make against them, doth more than compensate the pains and trouble which we have undergone. There will, indeed, in this our imperfect state, be strivings and lustings of the flesh against the Spirit, even in the best of men: but yet, certainly, the delight, which the soul enjoys after it hath conquered its sinful inclinations, is, infinitely

beyond all comparison, above the delight which it could have reaped by consenting to them. What a calm and sweet repose is upon the face of the soul, after it hath performed a duty, and can reflect upon it as performed sincerely ! after it hath wrestled with a temptation, and overcome it ! how sweetly then doth he enjoy himself ! how sweetly doth he enjoy his God ! his prospect into heaven is clear ; and he can discern a pleased God, a loving Father accepting his service and preparing his reward. Let others please themselves in the bitter sweets of sin ; yet, certainly, the least relish of such pure, such unexpressible joy, is infinitely to be preferred before all the washy pleasures of vice and luxury, though conscience and condemnation were abstracted from them. Here, believe it, is true joy : it is not clamorous nor noisy ; but a calm sedate joy, that ravisheth the heart with a secret but powerful delight. The pleasures of sin are but for a moment ; like the empty crackling of thorns under a pot, that make a short-lived blaze, and presently expire in smoke : but the pleasures of holiness are permanent and abiding ; and entertain the soul with a most delightful remembrance, whensoever it shall look back and review its actions. This is a pleasure, which never cloyes, never tires us : neither can the frequent repetition, nor the long continuance of it, weary us : whereas all earthly pleasures grow either dull or distateful, if they are not often changed. But a pious soul need not invent variety of diversions, to entertain himself comfortably : let him but look within doors, retire into his own breast, and he shall there find abundant joys, which, though they are still the same, are ever fresh. But, this self-reflection, which is so sweet and comfortable to a true Christian, is a rack and torture to wicked and dissolute wretches : they carry a hated monitor about them in their own breast, a witness and a reprover of all their lewdness ; and, when they seek for pleasure in sinning, it is their trouble and vexation that they cannot sin more quietly : there is a busy conscience of their own, which dogs them at the heels wherever they go, scourges them with scorpions, and threatens them with the vengeance of everlasting fire : and this embitters their delights ; and, though it cannot withhold them from sinning, yet makes their very sins their punishment and torment. So that, if it were only upon the account of the reflections of conscience, a holy and pious life is infinitely more pleasant, than a lewd and wicked one.

iii. THE HOPE AND EXPECTATION OF THE ETERNAL REWARD OF OUR OBEDIENCE, makes a holy life to be pleasant and joyful.

The Psalmist tells us, that, in the keeping of God's commandments *there is great reward*: Ps. xix. 11. Our very work is reward for itself; and, if God should never give us other, yet we should be abundantly recompensed in the inward peace and satisfaction of our consciences, which can no other way be enjoyed: yet our gracious God both gives us such work as is reward for itself, and promiseth us an infinite reward for doing that work. Were there really as many difficulties in religion as our sloth is apt to imagine; yet, methinks, when such an excessive recompence as that of eternal life and glory is propounded to us, this should remove all obstacles, facilitate all enterprizes, and make the utmost pains and labour to attain it, pleasant and delightful. We see with what pleasure men strive and contend for a prize: the poor pitiful reward of a mouthful of praise, or the gain of some honorary trifle, makes them account that but a sport and recreation, which else were a toil and difficult labour. And, what! shall we, who are running a race in the ways of true wisdom, and see the crown of glory and immortality hung up at the goal, faint and shrink at it as an uneasy and laborious task, to intend our nerves, and to press still on towards the mark? Certainly, there can be no greater pleasure in the world than to strive in this race, to gain ground towards heaven, to make and to observe our progress in our holy course, to have the crown still in our eye till we come at last to reach it with our hand. And he, who cannot account this pleasant, hath not a soul capable of true delight, nor a spirit brave and gallant enough to be a Christian.

Thus I have demonstrated to you, that the pious is the only pleasant life, both from the Suitableness of it to the principles of our Reason, the comfortable Reflections of our Consciences, and the Hopes of Eternal Life.

Let me add one Demonstration more.

iv. That must needs be most pleasant, which CALMS ALL OUR PERTURBATIONS AND DISTURBANCES, AND FITS US TO ENJOY BOTH GOD AND OURSELVES IN A SEDATE COMPOSURE.

But this is the effect, only of religion and true piety. Our disquiets proceed chiefly from the hurries of our mutinous passions: grief, anger, fear, and the rest, do oftentimes break

forth upon the soul, like so many violent winds upon the sea, and ruffle it into a tempest, so that our reason is in danger to be tossed and shipwrecked. Now it is only the powerful command of religion, which can say unto these winds, *Peace, be still*. Certainly, that man can neither enjoy peace nor pleasure, where these unruly passions tyrannize: what a troublesome, vexatious life doth he lead, that is a slave either to envy, or fear, or wrath! when he shall be continually fretting himself at another's prosperity, raging and studying revenge for every petty injury, grieving and desponding under every cross providence, frightened beyond the succours of his reason at every shadow and suspected danger! certainly, if there can be any pleasure in such a man's soul, there may be pleasure and peace where fury dwells. But, religion, and the fear of God, settles and composes all these perturbations: and, by its majesty and authority, binds them all to the peace; so that we shall not dare immoderately to grieve or fear, nor at all to envy or meditate revenge. And, although the curbing of our passions seems so difficult a matter; and is one of those things, which make religion uneasy and unpleasant to those, who are wrapped away with them: yet, without doubt, he, who checks and restrains the exorbitancies of his passions, lives a much more pleasant and easy life, than he, who lets them fly out into all extremities. I leave it to you to judge, whether it be not more for the peace and comfort of a man's life to forgive wrongs, than to perpetuate them by revenge. Besides the intolerable torment of a malicious spirit, is it not far better to rejoice at thy neighbour's prosperity, than to vex and fret at it? for, by the one, thou enjoyest a share of his blessings; but, by the other, thou dost not enjoy thine own. And, to resign up thyself to the will of God with patience and contentedness, suppressing thy immoderate grief for any affliction brought upon thee, is certainly much more for the comfort of thy life, than to languish in sorrow, and unfruitfully to consume thyself for what was not at thy dispose. So that, I say, religion is the best means to quiet all the tumults of your passions, and to make your minds serene and calm: than which there is scarce a greater pleasure imaginable.

See here, then, the woeful mistake of the world, in point of pleasure. They all pretend to it; but they seek it in those ways, which are the causes of all their disquiet and trouble. True pleasure consists not in noise and laughter: that is *the mirth of*

fools; and it is a sign that all is not quiet within, when they are so loud and clamorous to drown it. No: true pleasure consists in clear thoughts, sedate affections, sweet reflections; a mind even and stayed, true to its God, and true to itself. There is, indeed, a little sordid brutish pleasure in sin; but it vanishes like smoke, and, if we be not utterly hardened, like smoke it will leave us nothing but tears in our eyes: or, if customary sinning hath made us insensible, it is but like giving drink to a hydropic person, which, though it please his palate for the present, afterwards sadly encreaseth and enrageth his thirst.

Compare the pleasures, which a true pious Christian enjoys, with the muddy delights of a swinish sensualist who gratifies all his carnal desires; and you will find so vast a difference between them, that the very argument of pleasure, which usually lies as a main prejudice against a holy life, if it be rightly stated, will prove the most advantageous motive to induce us to embrace it. For, consider, whilst thou gratifiest all thy propensions and desires, what exquisite pleasures canst thou find, but such as are common to the very beasts as well as thee? Yea, and thou shewest thyself more irrational than the brute creatures; for they keep within the compass of their nature, but thou transgressest the laws of thine: and either shame or conscience will give thee many a secret twitch and gird, and whisper sad things to thee, which will, in spite of thee, make thy heart heavy, when thy face perhaps runs over with a counterfeit laughter. It is impossible, if thou hast any remainders of a man left within thee, to debauch away the natural impressions of a deity, of death, of judgment, and of future punishments: these cold and shivering thoughts will come in, and be like water cast upon all thy delights, when they flame highest; and, in the midst of thy cups and jollity and frolic extravagancies, be like a hand, not upon the wall, but in thine own conscience, writing bitter things against thee.

Well, when thou hast run through all the shapes of voluptuousness, what remains but only a damp and dulness upon thy spirits, a sting and anguish in thy soul, a grating remembrance of them, and dire presages of eternal vengeance? Dost thou not, when the phrenzy is over and the rage of thy lusts somewhat abated, dost thou not a thousand times call thyself beast and fool for them? Hast thou never seen a drunkard, the next morning spewing out his shame and his repentance together? Hast thou never observed the glutton to sigh and groan under the load of

his crude surfeits, and endeavour to disburden his conscience, as well as his stomach? These, who do not eat and drink that they may live, but live only that they may eat and drink, will then acknowledge, that temperance and sobriety are the only true voluptuousness; and, whilst their breath is still unsavoury with their undigested fumes, belch out a prayer to God to pardon them. And are these the bewitching pleasures of sin? for these, will any be persuaded to provoke his God, stain and wound his own conscience, dishonour his body and ruin his soul?

Certainly, there is nothing wherein the sorcery of sin doth more plainly appear, than in persuading men that there is any pleasure in being wicked; whereas their own experience can abundantly attest, that it is a very hell above ground, and a damnation beforehand. Are these the men, who are frightened from religion, because of the irksomeness and difficulty of its duties, because it will expose them to sadness and melancholy? whereas, I dare avow to them, that the most melancholy and gloomy day, which a true Christian spends in the most rigorous parts of his religion, with sighs breaking from his heart and tears running down his cheeks, hath a thousand times more true pleasure and more true joy in it, than all the days of mirth, and laughter, and excess, and riot of voluptuous sinners.

III. But, here, common observation and experience will be cited, to DISPROVE all these speculations concerning the pleasure of religion.

For, “What!” will the voluptuary say, “can we believe that there is any such exquisite pleasure in a holy life, when we see those, who are its votaries, so pensive and melancholy, as if rust and soot were the only ingredients of their complexion? Their looks are sour and dejected; their discourses interrupted with sighs: still they are lamenting themselves, and the iniquities or calamities of the times, and are fit for no other converse but with tombs or ghosts. Whereas the rest of the world are gay and frolic: mirth and laughter are the employment of their lives: not a thought lies heavy on their hearts, nor a day on their hands. And therefore, certainly, whatever advantages a pious life may have for the future, it cannot have that of pleasure for the present.”

This is a common prejudice: and it is but a prejudice. For,

though I must confess, that the morose temper of too many Christians hath brought this scandal upon religion, who, by an affected and whining sadness and a querulous humour, occasion the ways of God to be evil spoken of, and affright others from them; yet, if we nearly examine the matter, we shall find, that abating the complexional infelicity of some, it is altogether as fallacious to judge of men's joys by their outward appearances, as of their thoughts and intentions.

And, therefore,

i. I grant that the JOYS OF RELIGION ARE NOT LOUD AND TUMULTUOUS; BUT GRAVE, SOLID, AND SERIOUS.

It is a true saying, *Res severa est verum gaudium*: "True joy is a severe thing." It is not so light and frothy, as to float upon the superficies of the face. It lies deep and recondite, in the centre of the soul; and fills it with calm thoughts, sedate affections, an uniform peace and tranquillity; and diffuses such a sweetness through all the powers of it, that a true Christian, who loves his God, loves likewise himself, and the entertainment that he finds at home in his own bosom: and this ravishing joy so wholly possesseth him, that, if he seem less affected with the ludicrous follies of this world, it is but as grave and wise men are, not much pleased with the play-games of children, because they have nobler and more generous delights of their own: the mirth and jollity of slight persons is too trivial, and their laughter itself too ridiculous, to recreate him: the soft and peaceful whispers of his dear conscience are a thousand times more diverting to him, than all the wit and merriment of those pleasant companions, whose whole life is but a jest and a tale: and, if at any time he seem reserved and retired in their company, it is, that he may listen to the more cheerful discourses of his own heart; or that he is really concerned that the noise and din about him hath disturbed that secret communication; or, lastly, that he is cautious, lest he should be betrayed to any thing that might grieve a better friend, than any of them. And, now, can you really think, that such a person is melancholy and displeased, who carries himself thus, only lest he should be so? the mirth of the sensual and debauched world would violate all his delights: it would be but like a dirty torrent tumbling into a clear river, troubling its pure streams, and leaving nothing but defilement, mud, and disturbance behind it: and shall we think that man's life sad and disconsolate, because he seems less merry

and jovial than others ; whereas, in truth, he is so wholly addicted to pleasure, so much a servant to his own content, that he would much rather displease all the world than himself, and studies nothing more, than how he may keep his joys free from mixture and abatement ?

But,

ii. IF, AT ANY TIME, HE BE REALLY SAD AND DEJECTED, THIS IS NOT TO BE IMPUTED TO RELIGION AND PIETY ; BUT TO THE WANT OF IT, EITHER IN HIMSELF OR OTHERS.

The irreligion and impieties of the age in which he lives, often draw tears from his eyes and sighs from his heart : and, when the flood-gates of wickedness are opened, and a deluge of sin and profaness overspreads the face of the whole earth, can you think it an unreasonable melancholy, that he should wish, with the Prophet Jeremiah, that his *head were waters*, and his *eyes fountains of tears*, that he *might weep day and night for the slain of.....his people*, for so many thousands that fall, and are slain by their vices and debaucheries ? Were but the world more holy, there would not be so great occasion for grief and sadness as there is ; neither would the godly lament so mournfully, nor all smart so sorely as they do. But, whilst wicked men are merrily sporting themselves to death and plucking vengeance upon their own heads, his charity and compassion move him to mourn for those, who do not, who will not mourn for themselves ; and to deprecate those judgments, which they are defying. And, therefore, for them to object melancholy and pensiveness, to abuse their gravity and turn their seriousness into ridicule, is both disingenuous and ungrateful : disingenuous it is, to upbraid them with that sorrow and sadness, of which they themselves are the cause ; and it is ungrateful, to upbraid them with it, since it many times averts those plagues and judgments, which else would soon turn their rants and frolics into roarings and howlings.

But, as they have too much cause to mourn for the sins of the times and places in which they live, so likewise for the sins of which they themselves are guilty. They often weep over the review of their own faults and follies ; and, with the holy Apostle, cry out, O wretched men that we are ! who shall deliver us from this body of death ! And, indeed, it is but fit and just, that, whilst the heart is a fountain of sin, the eyes should be fountains of tears. But, what ! shall we therefore be so un-

reasonable, as to charge their holiness with their grief and sorrow; whereas, were they not in part unholy, they would have no cause for it? It is not their walking in the ways of wisdom, but their deviating from them, that makes their lives unpleasant: it is their wanton straying into the world's common, and seeking the foreign delights of sin, that disturbs their peace, fills their hearts with heaviness, their eyes with tears, and their face with shame: whereas, had they kept themselves within the limits of their duty, and the boundaries which God had prescribed them, their peace had been as secure as their innocence. Did you ever hear any of them complain, that they had been too holy and strict, too circumspect and conscientious? this is the complaint of the world against them, but it was never theirs. Whereas there are thousands and ten thousands, who sadly lament their former ways of sin and wickedness, (for sorrow and shame are the necessary consequences of guilt) either here on earth to true repentance, or else in hell to everlasting despair. So that, it is not holiness and piety, but the want and defects of it, which are the cause of all that sadness, which so much discourages the world, and makes them wrongfully accuse religion for it.

But,

iii. EVEN THE TEARS AND SORROWS OF A TRUE PIOUS CHRISTIAN HAVE A MORE SOLID JOY IN THEM, THAN ALL THE NOISE AND EXTRAVAGANT JOLLITY OF WICKED MEN.

There is a sweetness even in mourning, when it is filial and ingenuous. Tears are a solace, and grief itself an entertainment. Sometimes, the very delicacy of a man's spirit will make him dissolve into weeping; and the love of God, as a heavenly flame enkindled in the heart, will distil tears through his eyes. The tenderness of his affection will engage him to a sweet mourning over his faults and miscarriages. And, whilst the Spirit of God moves upon the face of these waters; the next thing to be created in that soul, is light, peace, and joy. Those, who have experienced it can tell you, that the most transporting consolations of the Holy Ghost are then given in, when they are most retired and pensive: they can rejoice that they are sad, because such a kind and child-like sorrow is to them a most certain evidence of the favour of God, and the remission of those sins for which they mourn. Whereas, on the contrary, Solomon tells

us, Prov. xiv. 13. *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness:* such, indeed, is the mirth of all wicked men: let them dissemble it never so artificially, yet they do but, with the Spartan boy, laugh and smile, while the fox, which he had stolen and kept concealed under his coat, was all the while tearing out his bowels: so these put on a counterfeit laughter, when yet, all the while, guilt and fear, terrors and anguish, are corroding and gnawing their very bowels.

So that hence you see, the sadness and mournfulness of the true pious Christians is but a conceived prejudice, no real objection against the ways of religion and holiness.

IV. “But, what!” you will say, “is there then nothing unpleasant, nothing grievous and irksome in them? Can it be possible that this strait and narrow way should have no thorns, no rubs in it; nothing that is rigorous, severe, and uneasy? What then shall we think of mortification, and self-denial; of plucking out our right-eyes, and cutting off our right-hands; a patient enduring of injuries, and requiting them with kindnesses; forgiving our most malicious enemies, and praying for them; a willingness to sacrifice our dearest enjoyments, yea our lives themselves, for the name of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience? Are not these main and essential parts of our religion? And is there nothing in them, that is difficult to be done, and grievous to be borne? If not, why then are we so often commanded to strive, to watch, to fight, to wrestle, to run, to endure and hold out unto the last? all which expressions do certainly import, that there is much pains and hardship to be undergone in a Christian Life; especially also since it is represented as such a difficult and admirable thing to persevere in it unto the end. What pleasure can there be in crossing a man’s own inclinations and appetites? in the self-cruelty of cutting off what is as dear to us as the limbs of our body? What pleasure in losing all for the sake of our religion? in rotting in a prison, or frying at a stake? What pleasure in bearing affronts and contumelies, without either reply or revenge? Certainly, he, who can find out pleasure in these things, is fit to advance what paradoxes he pleaseth to the world; but will be much puzzled to find either reasons to maintain them, or persons to believe them.”

To this answer,

i. That THERE ARE MANY THINGS IN RELIGION, WHICH ARE INDEED DIFFICULT AND LABORIOUS, BUT THIS DOTHT NOT PRESENTLY ARGUE THEM TO BE UNPLEASANT AND GRIEVOUS.

Some of the greatest pleasures of this life are so; and that is scarce held to be a pleasure, which is not heightened and commended by labour. The pleasantness of religion and piety consists not in supine sloth and negligence: there must be earnest endeavours, strivings and strugglings to the uttermost. To a generous mind, as a Christian's is, nothing can be more pleasant than victory and conquest; which cannot be atchieved without contending for it. The whole life of a Christian is a continual warfare. Now that, which makes the name of war so dreadful, is only the uncertainty of success: who is there so cowardly and faint-hearted, that, were he sure of victory and triumph, would be afraid of the encounter? Why, victory itself is listed under a Christian's command. Other conquerors have found it very fickle and inconstant: when they have levied armies and shaken nations, yet they could never make success take pay under them. But herein a Christian is more than a conqueror, because he is always sure of conquest, if himself will. And, whensoever we go forth to the combat, if we be not extremely base and perfidious to our own souls, we may be sure to return adorned with wreaths and loaden with spoils. The mortification of our lusts is confessedly the most uneasy, as it is the most necessary part, of our religion: and, yet, what are they but shadows cast upon your fancies, flitting, airy, and empty nothings? We are to conflict with our own desires, our own passions, our own wills; and what more is required to a conquest over these, besides a firm and undaunted resolution? That man shall certainly be master of himself, who will but dare to be so. What though it may cost pains and striving; though it may make the heart pant, and the soul run down with sweat: yet to see your enemies fall by heaps before your sword, to tread upon the slain, and to dip your foot in their blood; this certainty of conquest will make the combat pleasant, though it be laborious. And he, who cannot think this an incomparable pleasure, hath not spirit enough to be a Christian.

ii. Since all pleasure ariseth from the suitableness of objects and actions to our natures, we must consider that THERE IS A TWOFOLD NATURE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN, HIS CORRUPT AND HIS DIVINE NATURE.

He is not all of a piece, but hath two contrary parties struggling within him. There is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and what is pleasing to the one, is a vexation and torment to the other. Now all those rigorous duties of religion, which have been objected, are only so to thy corrupt and sinful inclinations; but they are a joy and pleasure to thy renewed and sanctified nature. Thou must therefore, of necessity, grieve and displease one part of thyself; and why then should it not be that, which is thy vile and sordid part? Give thy noble and heaven-born self the pleasure and divertisement of thwarting and overruling thy sensual desires. Yea, this indeed, if thou art a Christian, is thy true and proper self: the other is but thy slave and vassal. Grace is that, which gives a Christian his individuation and denomination; and the new and divine nature, of which thou partakest, ought to be the commanding principle within thee, as being a participation of God; and therefore cannot, without the highest practical blasphemy, be subjected to thy lusts and corruptions, which are the portion of the Devil. And therefore the Apostle distinguisheth between his unrenewed part and himself: Rom. vii. 17. *It is no more I.....but sin that dwelleth in me.* So that those, which are accounted the greatest rigours and severities of religion, and which fright so many from embracing it, are really the pleasures and entertainments of a pious soul. Yea, I will be bold to say, that a true Christian more indulgeth himself by mortification, more gratifieth himself by denying himself, enjoys more true pleasure and satisfaction in those things which are looked upon as the austerities of a holy life, than all the voluptuaries of the world can, in abandoning themselves over to all the profuse delights of a sinful and wicked life: for, even where there is no true grace to make a conquering resistance, yet there is a natural conscience to make a murmuring and a troublesome one: all the disturbance, that a true Christian finds, is only in the conflict, and, when that is ended, he sits down and enjoys the blessed fruits of his victory in peace and satisfaction; but in wicked men, the pleasure of sinning makes many sour returns upon them, and there are not only some stings mingled

with their honey whilst it is yet in their mouths, but afterwards it turns all to sting in their consciences and gall and wormwood in their bowels. Now let me leave it to you to judge, which enjoyeth a more pleasant and quiet life; they, who cross their corruptions, and afterwards rejoice that they have done it; or they, who cross their consciences, and are afterwards vexed and tormented for it: the one, indeed, conflicts with his lusts, and buffets his slaves when they rebel against him; but, afterwards, finds that peace and joy, which more than compensate his labour: the other conflicts with his light; and, after he hath offered horrid violence to his natural sentiments, is tormented with such pangs and horrors, that he becomes a burden and executioner to himself: and this puts him upon far greater abominations, that he may quite extinguish that glowing spark within him; that he may murder that troublesome monitor, his own conscience, and, if it be possible, may attain to the highest perfection, both of his pleasure and misery, even to sin quietly.

iii. Consider, that THE SEVERITIES of RELIGION, as mortification, self-denial, &c. ARE FAR MORE DIFFICULT AND DISTASTEFUL AT OUR FIRST ENTRANCE UPON A HOLY LIFE; THAN THEY WILL BE, WHEN WE ARE CONFIRMED AND HABITUATED IN IT.

Indeed, those, who are early pious, whose virtue groweth up and increaseth with them from their tender years, escape the pangs and molestations which others endure, in rooting out inveterate habits and changing the whole course of their lives at once. It must needs appear irksome, at first, to check those inordinate desires and to put a stop to the current of those vices, which have got authority by prescription, and never knew what it was to be opposed or denied before. But, whatever difficulties we may find in this, they ought rather to be imputed to the novelty and unusualness, than to the real hardship of the undertaking. And, perhaps, were a man resolved, from a long-continued and habituated virtue, to turn debauched and profligate, he would, at first, find not much less trouble in the ways of vice, than a new convert meets with in the ways of piety. Custom and continuance will facilitate all things: and, when the roughness which is upon the soul is well worn off by use, it will the more easily and sweetly move itself in a strict and religious course.

iv. Consider, that THE SEVERITIES OF RELIGION ARE NO MORE NOR GREATER, THAN WHAT WE ARE CONTENT TO UNDERGO IN THINGS OF ANOTHER NATURE.

Nay, many times the sinner meets with far more trouble in the ways of sin, than the most strict and holy Christian can do in the ways of obedience. What strange artifices and intricate methods must he oftentimes use, sometimes to commit his sins, but most commonly to conceal them! it requires a piece of subtlety and stratagem to be wicked. Whereas piety is an open, plain, and simple thing: we need not lay plots for it, nor study to find out the methods of it: there needs no other skill, besides an honest heart and a firm resolution: and therefore it is said, Isa. xxxv. 8. *A highway shall be there.....and it shall be called The way of holiness: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Nay, were we but content to undergo as much hardship and difficulty in the ways of religion, for the obtaining of heaven and eternal happiness; as the men of this world do, for the gaining of some poor, sordid, secular advantages; we should be most unreasonable to complain of them as rough and uneasy. What Christian is there, that takes so much pains to be saved, as many thousand artificers do, who drudge day and night at some poor manual employment to get a little pelf? and yet it is far more certain, that an industrious Christian shall be saved, than that an industrious tradesman shall grow rich. Men are contented to rise up early and to go to bed late, and to eat the bread of carefulness, to bear many disappointments and undergo many hardships, only in hopes to gain some temporal advantage: and yet they murmur and complain of it as an insupportable burden, if they are put upon any difficulties for the gaining of heaven and eternal salvation; although the gain of this latter be as infinitely more certain, as it is infinitely more precious than the gaining of the former. So that, in truth, all the complaints against the rigours of religion proceed only upon mistakes and prejudices; and there is no course of life, shape it which way you will, that hath so much ease, sweetness, and delight in it, as the truly pious and holy.

Let me then persuade you, not to give ear to the lying suggestions of the Devil and your own sloth. They are but slanders cast upon the ways of God, on purpose to deter you from walking in them. Do but make the trial: enter upon them, and

you shall find incomparably more sweetness and satisfaction, more joy and peace in them, than ever you found in the ways of sin and folly. Possibly some, who only as spies have entered upon the borders of this Land of Canaan, have brought up an evil report upon it, when they have returned back again to the wilderness. But, I beseech you to believe the concurrent testimonies of all good men, who have searched it throughout, and have neither interest nor design to deceive you. Believe the testimony of a Caleb, of a Joshua, rather than the reports of those, whose sloth or cowardice represents all attempts difficult, and all difficulties insuperable. Believe the testimony of God himself, who assures you, it is a land flowing with milk and honey. Let me therefore encourage you, in the words of Caleb; *Let us go up.....and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.* All imagined hardships shall vanish before us; and, instead of rough encounters, we shall certainly enjoy ourselves in pleasure and peace. This is the only way, wherein we can enjoy either God or ourselves. And this way, which is joy and peace throughout, will infallibly bring us to that blessed presence, where there is *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.*

A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
VIRTUES WHICH ADORN RELIGION.

FROM TITUS ii. 10.
THAT THEY MAY ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR IN
ALL THINGS.

RELATIVE Duties are, of all others, both the most difficult to perform; and, when performed, the best and surest trials of true Christianity and of the power of real godliness.

Difficult they are, because most of the temptations, which assault us, are chiefly bent against the careful and conscientious discharge of these. For they so often come to be put in practice, that the Devil can never want either matter or occasion for his suggestions. They are so interwoven with our lives, and mingle themselves with all our actions and concerns, that it must needs be much harder not to miscarry here, than it is in other duties of religion, which do not so frequently call upon us: inasmuch as it is far more difficult not to do that negligently, which we are to do always; than that, which only now and then requires our care and attendance. And our own experience, I believe, can sufficiently testify, that it is a greater task, and that we are fain to use more force and violence upon ourselves, to demean ourselves as Christians at home in our own families, in our shops, in our trades and daily employments, than in the church and the more solemn and immediate worship of God.

And, as Relative Duties are the most difficult; so are they the most certain and infallible evidences of true grace that can be given. For, as persons usually wear masks and vizards

abroad, but lay them aside when they come home: so the hypocrite, however he may be masked and disguised in duties which are beside his ordinary course of life; yet, when he returns to his domestic and ordinary converse, he will certainly lay aside his vizard, and appear in the management of his daily affairs, to be what indeed he is, unjust and unconscionable. For, truly, it is almost impossible to lay such a violence upon nature, as to personate and counterfeit that, which must be perpetual and customary. And therefore it fares with such as with players; who, though upon the stage they act the parts of kings and nobles, yet strip off all their pomp and ostentation in the tiring-room, and return home to their abject and sordid life again.

Now, upon both these accounts, both because they are difficult and because they are the surest testimonies of our sincerity, we find the Apostle so often inculcating the practice of these Relative Duties upon Christians. Neither do I know any one subject, on which he is either so large or so pressing. We have ample directions given us concerning our demeanour in them, 1 Cor. vii. throughout the whole chapter: Eph. v. from the 22d verse to the end: Eph. vi. from the 1st to the 10th verse: Col. iii. from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter: and Col. iv. 1. and 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. Nay, there is scarce any Epistle, wherein the duties of our relations are not pressed upon us, as the greatest part and the best evidence of true Christianity. So, in this chapter of my text, the Apostle exhorts Titus, who was constituted overseer of the Church of Crete; both to a sedulous care of performing his own duty towards them, as standing in that spiritual relation; and likewise earnestly to urge upon them the performance of their Relative Duties, according to the capacities and stations wherein they respected each other: and, that he might rightly divide to each their portion, he directs him what instructions he should give the *aged*, vv. 2, 3. that the *men* should be *sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience*: to the *women*; that they should *not* be *false accusers*, or *make-baits*, sowing strife and dissention by idle tattle and groundless rumours; that they should *not* be *given to much wine*, but should be *teachers of good things*: to the younger; vv. 4, 5, 6. that the *women* should be *sober*, and *love their husbands*, and *their children*; that they should be *discreet, chaste, keepers at home*, and *obedient to their own husbands*: that the *men* should be *sober-minded*, not puffed up with vain-glory and self-conceit, the sins usually of that age: and then, in the 9th

and 10th verses, he descends to the duties of *servants*; and lays an injunction upon him to exhort them, that they *be obedient unto their own masters, pleasing them well in all things: not answering again, when they are reprov'd; not to purloin from them, but to be faithful in the trust which is committed to them.*

These are the duties, which St. Paul gives in charge, to so great a pastor as Titus, who was set over the whole island of Crete, as the chief pastor in dignity, and I think in authority and jurisdiction too. These, I say, are the duties, which so great an Apostle enjoins so great a Pastor earnestly to press upon them. But, alas! have we not many, so superciliously proud and so puffed up with a vain conceit of their greater perfection, that they would account that minister flat and dull, who should insist upon such low things as these are? Nothing, now-a-days, is thought worthy an auditory, but some high mystical speculations; which, too often, are as far from being intelligible, as they are from being practicable. And, for these common and daily duties of a Christian Life, they undervalue them as below their attainments: and leave them to honest, moral men; as fit for such only, whom they despise and undervalue too. Let me tell such pharisaical spirits, that it is not their sublime notions, nor their refined phrases; it is not any affected, new-fangled way of expressing the awful and tremendous truths of the Gospel; it is not their contemning the weaknesses of some, nor their judging the miscarriages of others: but it is the careful and conscientious practice of these mean and slighted duties of a Christian Life, that gives a lustre to religion, and makes the face of it look beautiful and amiable. And therefore the Apostle, after he had given such a strict and particular charge concerning these sundry duties, subjoins the reason why he would have him so instant in exhorting them to these: and that is in the words of my text, *That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

Now, here, I shall,

I. Shew WHAT IT IS to ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

And shall consider

What is meant by *the Doctrine of God our Saviour.*

What it is to *adorn* this Doctrine.

i. To the FIRST, briefly.

Though God be an essential name, and therefore common to each glorious Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, yet that addition of *our Saviour* seems to restrain it to the Second Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God our Saviour in a most especial manner. And this *Doctrine of God our Saviour*, here spoken of, is nothing else but the Gospel of Christ; containing, both those truths which Christ himself immediately taught, and those also which he by the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles and penmen of the Scripture to reveal unto the world.

Now the whole sum of this doctrine of Christ consists in these Two things:

In Principles, containing the Mysteries of Faith.

In Precepts, enjoining the Duties of Obedience.

Some things in the Doctrine of our Saviour we are to know and believe, which could never have been discovered to us, but by divine revelation. Such are, the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Redemption of the World by his death and passion, the Way of obtaining Justification and eternal Salvation by believing; and such other profound truths, which neither reason, nor the works of creation and providence, could ever have disclosed to us, but are now made known only by the Gospel.

Other things in this doctrine, we are commanded, not only to believe, but to practise. And those are, not only all the duties of the Moral Law, respecting both God and Man, which are now taken into the pale and within the protection of the Gospel; but also the duties, which immediately belong unto the Covenant of Grace; such as our believing on Jesus Christ, accepting him in all his offices, and relying upon him alone for life and eternal happiness.

This, in sum, is *the Doctrine of God our Saviour*: and, by this, we may the easier give a resolution to

ii. The Second thing propounded: WHAT IT IS TO ADORN THIS DOCTRINE.

And that I shall do, both Negatively and Positively.

1. *Negatively.*

(1) It is not to add any new beauty or excellency unto it, which was not in it before.

For this doctrine is every way perfect and complete: and so it is affirmed to be, James i. 25. *Whoso looketh into the perfect*

law of liberty. There is nothing superfluous, nothing defective in it: but a perfect symmetry, and harmony of parts; each of them, as it is in a beautiful body, lovely in itself; and all of them, taken together, mutually setting off and making each other more beautiful and lovely. Here need no Unwritten Traditions, to which the Romanists give an equal veneration with the Scriptures: for, either their traditions are consonant to Scripture, and so are unnecessary; or contrary to Scripture, and so are pernicious: and, if it be said, they may be diverse from Scripture and yet not contrary to it, as delivering down to the world those truths and those duties, concerning which the Scripture hath made no mention, I answer, This is not to be diverse only, but contrary; for the Scripture itself hath said, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, that it is all *given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works:* there can, therefore, be no Unwritten Traditions joined in commission with the Scriptures: but, if they speak according to that word, they may be received as truths rightly collected from it; but if they lay down doctrines repugnant to Scripture, or teach any thing as necessary to be believed and embraced which is not contained in those Sacred Oracles, they ought to be rejected as old lies, and tales forged by the old Father of Lies, only to deceive the minds of the simple. And those, who think their religion beautiful because of these, take trash and dung for ornaments and monstrousness for beauty: and, in their opinion, that giant, mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 20, who had six fingers on each hand (more than nature intended), must pass for the most comely person. Certainly, the doctrine of Christ is so entire and perfect, that it needs no new additions, to eke it out; nor any of the paint of the Antichristian Jezebel, to beautify and adorn it.

(2) To adorn the Doctrine of Christ, is not to dress it up in any new fashion or new mode of religion.

Truly, there is a kind of garb of religion now abroad. We must not speak, and I am sure we do not act, like the Christians of elder times: their simplicity and plainness, both of speech and of conversation, is now worne as much out of request, as their clothes are: and those truths, which warmed their hearts and saved their souls; those truths, by which they lived, and for which they would have died; are now looked upon, by the sprucer Christians of our age, as old-fashioned things, and so

laid aside. Some trim it up in uncouth phrases, and never think they speak like the oracles of God, unless they speak that which cannot be understood by the wit of man; and, like the priests of Apollo, are then inspired, when they utter unintelligible riddles and ambiguities: as if to adorn the doctrine of Christ, were to veil it; and it were then most beautiful, when most obscure. Others think they adorn it, when they are still altering and changing it; casting out this way, and bringing in another; and then finding fault with that: as if religion were designed not to reform us, but still to be reformed itself; and were made to no other purpose in the world, but only to be mended. This is not to adorn the doctrine of Christ, but abundantly to disparage it; when either we think to add any new excellency unto it, which before it had not; or to dress and trick it up in new fashions and new modes of religion. It is not to be done by old traditions, or new opinions, or any fantastical and affected way of delivering and expounding the truths of the Gospel.

2. But, *Positively*:

To *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, is, to live conformably unto it. For the doctrine of Christ consists, as I told you, in Two things: the Mysteries of Faith, and the Duties of Obedience. And we adorn this doctrine, when we live suitably to both of these.

(1) When we endeavour to live according to the Belief of those Mysteries of Grace and Mercy, which are revealed in it.

In this doctrine it is, that we have the glad-tidings of happiness and salvation restored unto mankind by a Mediator: that the forfeiture we had made of our very lives and souls to the justice of God, is now redeemed by our Surety Jesus Christ; who hath undertaken the desperate work of reconciling sinners to a holy and jealous God, and hath himself filled up that *μεγα χάσμα*, that vast and unpassable gulf, which was between heaven and us; laying his cross for our bridge, and himself for our way to pass over into eternal bliss and joy. Now we are said to *adorn this doctrine of God our Saviour*, when we live answerably to the obligations which the grace of the Gospel lays upon us: what obligations they are, the Apostle tells us in the two next verses after my text: *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; Teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in*

this present world. It is the greatest reproach which can be cast upon the doctrine of Christ, that it makes men libertines, or gives them indulgence to sin. Some may possibly so argue, that, if Christ procured happiness and salvation for them, there lies no necessity upon them to exercise holiness and strictness; but they may live at random, for Christ hath done all: this is that cursed inference, which the Apostle, all along in his Epistles, confutes and abhors: *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!* and this is the greatest reproach that can be cast on this doctrine, that it should hold forth Christ as a patron of licentiousness, who was the greatest pattern and example of holiness and purity. No, certainly, he never intended by satisfying the justice of God, to encourage the wickedness of man; nor, that the promises of the Gospel should be produced to invalidate the precepts of the Law: but, as the Apostle tells us, v. 14. of this chapter, *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* The proper influence, which divine mercy should have upon us, is to conform us to the divine purity: so saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these promises, the promises of heaven and glory through Christ, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God:* and, 1 John iii. 3. *Every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure.* Now when the grace, which is exhibited to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is suffered to have this kindly effect upon us, by a sweet and genuine attractiveness to engage us to a holy and blameless life, then is our conversation such as adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour.

(2) To adorn this doctrine, is, to live conformably to the Commands of it; requiring from us the Duties of new Obedience, in order to our eternal salvation.

Now these commands of the Gospel, are the whole Moral Law; which is taken into the protection of it, and fenced about with the super-added authority of Christ's sanction. It is only through the grace of the Gospel, that the imperfect obedience of a believer is at all available to his salvation, since the Law of Works accepts not of any obedience under the degree of most perfect and absolute: so that when we endeavour, according to the uttermost of our power and ability, to conform our lives to the commands of the Gospel; when, by our universal holiness and obedience, we strive in all things to please God, then do we

adorn the doctrine of Christ. We credit our profession, and set it off to the esteem of others, when our practices answer our pretences.

This is, in the general, to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*; to live suitably to the grace revealed in it, and to the duties enjoined by it.

II. Ornaments serve for two uses and intents. The one is, to cover the nakedness of those, who wear them; the other, to beautify and set them off to the esteem and acceptance of others. Now such A HOLY GOSPEL-LIFE, ADORNS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, BOTH THESE WAYS:

i. It HIDES THE NAKEDNESS, and TAKES AWAY THE SHAME OF RELIGION.

For nothing is a greater blemish and reproach to our profession, than the unsuitable lives of professors. I need not tell you, what a discredit Christians have brought upon Christianity itself, by their disorderly conversation. It were not so much to be lamented, if the shame of it lighted only upon those, who were guilty: but the name of Christ is blasphemed through their miscarriages; and every one is ready to cast the dirt and mire into which a professor falls, into the very face of religion itself; and to upbraid Christ with the crimes of those, who pretend to be his followers, and of his retinue.

1. There is a *Twofold Shame and Reproach, which befalls religion by the loose lives of those who profess it*:

Wicked men are hereby induced to think, that it is but Fabulous and a mere mockery.

That it is but Frivolous, and altogether unnecessary.

(1) They think that religion is but Mockery; and all, who profess it, are but a company of dissemblers and hypocrites.

Indeed, there is nothing, which can convince the world that there is any reality in religion, but the conforming of our lives strictly according to its rules and precepts. And we may well impute the increase and growth of the atheism that is now abroad, to those strong arguments which men have drawn from the lives of Christians, to confute the doctrine of Christianity: for, may they not justly conclude, that it is impossible that such men should believe what they profess, while their lives are so down-right contradictory to their creed? did they think it true,

that there are eternal rewards and eternal punishments prepared to be dispensed to men, according to their works; did they think it true, that hell, and wrath, and flames, and chains, and intolerable torments, must be the eternal portion of those, who reject the faith and disobey the commands of the Gospel; could it be possible that they should live at such a rate of vanity, looseness, and profaneness, as they do? And, upon this, they conclude all to be but a well-couched fable; and give the holy and everlasting Gospel of Christ, the lie. And what shame can be greater than this? It is a sad accusation, Rom. ii. 24. *The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you*: how so? because, as in the former verses, they rested in the Law, and had a form of knowledge; and were confident, that they were guides to the blind, and lights to them that sit in darkness: eminent professors it seems they were, like the men of our days: well, but mark; *Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God? Thou, that professest the Gospel, dost thou transgress the Law? Thou, that pretendest to near communion and acquaintance with God, dost thou live as without God in the world? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, nor lie, nor swear, nor be drunk, nor commit adultery; dost thou lie, and steal, and swear? art thou unclean? art thou intemperate, and as vile as the worst and vilest? Tremble at it: the name of the Great God is blasphemed among wicked wretches, through you: those, who were before profane, you make atheistical, scorning and deriding the Gospel of Christ as an idle whimsey; and, because they see so little in their lives, conclude that there is no difference at all, between those who are called Saints, and those who are called Sinners; but only, that the one have their tongues a little better hung, and their fancies a little higher screwed up, than the other. And, truly, I cannot but with shame and sadness reflect upon it, that the men of our profession are herein extremely guilty, who, by the unsuitableness of their conversation to the purity of their doctrine, make too many in the world believe, that it is their trade only to gull and cozen men; and persuade them to believe, what they are wiser than to believe themselves. Let us beware, lest these their blasphemies be not at last charged upon us, who, through a worldly, loose, and carnal conversation, have made religion even to stink in their nostrils. It is only the strictness of a gospel-life, which can convince the world, that religion is*

any thing real. And, if ever you would redeem its lost credit, shew, by the strictness and holiness of your lives, that you do indeed believe the doctrine which you profess; and that you look upon it as that doctrine, by which you expect to be judged at the Last Day.

(2) The disorderly conversation of professors, as it tempts wicked men to think religion to be a false and cunningly devised fable; so, at least, it tempts them to look upon it as altogether Needless.

Now what disgrace can be more foul, than to impute frivolousness to a doctrine, which calls itself the oracles of God, the only rule of holiness, and the only way to happiness? and to make that superfluous and unnecessary, whose chief excellency consists in its usefulness and tendency to our salvation? And yet this reproach upon the Gospel, through the licentiousness of those who profess it, will be almost unavoidable: for, if we compare the strict precepts of Christianity with the loose lives of Christians, we shall be shrewdly tempted to conclude, that certainly these men have found out an easier passage to heaven, than by the strait way and the narrow gate. And, questionless, this very thing hath been a stumbling-block, at which many have fallen, and dashed themselves to pieces: for what can they think, when, on the one hand, they hear holiness and purity so much recommended, so earnestly pressed upon us by the doctrine of Christ; and, on the other, see it so generally neglected and despised, by those who pretend themselves to be most studied and versed in that doctrine; but that, doubtless, these men do know somewhat, which perhaps they are loth to divulge, that gives them a dispensation from the practice of that godliness which they profess? and so they think that God useth them, as some tradesmen do their customers; that he asks high for heaven at first, but, when it comes to the issue, will fall of his price, and let them have it at a far easier rate than his first demands. And this, I am confident, is the very reason, why those very few, who walk strictly and holily, and demean themselves inoffensively both towards God and man, are yet so despised and hated in the world: some despise and scorn them, as a company of poor silly souls, who have less wit and more honesty by half than needs: others hate them, as a company of impertinent busy-bodies in religion, who serve only to raise the market for heaven, and readily give God all that he asks: but, generally, the world looks upon them, as too precise; and as

making too much ado about that salvation, which else would come at an easier rate. Look to it, lest this disrespect and villifying of the power of godliness and practical holiness, lest the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon a severe and mortified life, be not charged upon you, who, by a vain, carnal, frothy, and light conversation, have persuaded the world, that Christ was a more strict preacher than he will be a judge, and that his laws serve rather to shew what holiness is than to exact it.

And thus I have shewn you, how that, by the unsuitable lives of professors, this Twofold Shame will befall religion itself; that wicked men will be ready to account it either False or Frivolous.

2. And, *upon both accounts, consider what dreadful Consequences will follow.*

(1). To bring this blemish upon religion, that it is either false or unnecessary, is, in a great measure, to evacuate the death of Christ, and to frustrate one of the great ends for which he suffered.

There were Two great and important Reasons of Christ's death:

The one was, the Satisfaction of Divine Justice, as a Redeemer.

The other, the Attestation of the Truth of his Doctrine, as a Martyr. He hath sealed to the world, by his own blood, both the certainty and necessity of the doctrines which he taught: and therefore Christ himself tells Pilate, John xviii. 37. *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* And the greatest testimony, which he gave to the truth of the Gospel, was upon the cross; laying down his life, and shedding the last drop of his most precious blood, rather than he would disavow or recant the least article of that holy doctrine which he had delivered. And therefore we have that expression, 1 John v. 8. *There are three, that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood:* which, I think, may be congruously enough expounded, if we here take the first of these witnesses, *the spirit*, for the spirit or soul of Christ, which he breathed forth when he gave up the ghost; and the *water and blood*, to be that mixed stream, which flowed out of his side when the soldier's spear opened unto us that fountain of life and salvation. These three bear witness on earth to the doctrine of Christ, that it is both true in itself, and necessary also to eternal salvation.

Now consider, you, who, by a loose and wanton conversation, give occasion to the world to suspect either the one or the other, what do you less than invalidate the death of Christ; and bring men at last to believe, that he died for that which is either false or frivolous? which is the greatest affront and indignity, that can possibly be put upon our Lord and Saviour. Must not the world think it very strange, that Christ should willingly submit himself to so cruel and ignominious a death as that of the cross, for the confirmation of a doctrine, which few of those who profess the truth of it will yet be persuaded by all the rewards it propounds to put in practice? must they not needs judge it a most absurd thing, to spread a religion, and then die for it too, the rules and precepts of which are either impossible or unnecessary to be observed? And, if they look into the lives of Christians, and take notice how vastly repugnant their actions are to the rule which they profess; what else can they think, but that Christ lost his very death as well as his life, when he died to confirm such a religion, whose laws are so rigorous that they cannot be kept, or whose indulgence is so large that it cannot be out-sinned? Is this a doctrine, worth such pain and shame, worth martyrdom and the cross, which hath so little influence upon those who embrace it, to conform their lives to the principles which it teacheth? are the rewards which it promises so inconsiderable, or the punishments which it threatens so easy and gentle, or the evidence which it gives of the certainty of both so glimmering and obscure, that it cannot prevail with those who own it, to abandon their vices or their present pleasures, for future fears and hopes? And, what! shall we think such a religion can ever bring its followers to heaven, when as it cannot bring them to virtue? Believe it, this reflects highly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and lays an imputation, either upon his sincerity or his wisdom, in dying for a doctrine, which ordinarily hath no more power over those who profess and own it, than only to name them Christians.

(2) Consider, that the profession of religion, without a suitable practice, tends only to harden the hearts of wicked men, and to strengthen their hands in their course of sin and profaneness.

For such is either the weakness or corruption of human nature, that we are sooner led by examples, than by precepts; and follow the herd, rather than the guide; accounting nothing a

surer mark of the right way, than the tracks of others who go before us. Now when wicked men shall see thee, who art a professor, live unanswerably to that religion thou makest shew of, will they not be ready to bless themselves in their ways, and to cry, Peace, Peace, to themselves; since thou, who thinkest well of thyself, and whom others perhaps think well of too, art in reality no better than they? "Do not I see," may such an one say, "that those, who are taken for Saints, are proud, and impatient, and covetous, and revengeful? And if such men get to heaven, as they pretend they shall, why may not I? It is true, indeed, they talk of self-denial, and contempt of the world, and communion with God, and great spiritual enjoyments; but look into our lives, and mine is as harmless and innocent as theirs. If they let themselves loose to the pleasures of the world, drink till wine inflames them, discourse lewdly and lasciviously by tropes and metaphors, cozen and cheat in their bargains, and overreach the simplicity of those that trust them for their profession, why may not I; and yet be altogether as good a Christian, and in as safe a way of salvation, as they? They talk, indeed, of experiences, and acquaintance with God, and ravishing joys, and melting desires, and a road of words that I skill not: but, certainly, if God will not condemn them, though they do nothing more than I, but only talk; neither will he condemn me, for not talking as they do." And so they give themselves the reins, and boldly fly out into all manner of impieties: neither taking up the profession of religion, which they rightly judge to be of no worth without the practice of it; neither will be brought to the practice of religion, judging that needless, because they see it neglected by you who profess it. And so you make them sevenfold worse than if you yourselves were profligate and avowed sinners, denying the form of godliness, as well as the power of it. For a wicked and debauched sinner, though he may prevail upon others to draw them into the same excess of riot with himself; yet his example is not so likely to harden men in sin and to seal them up under impenitency, as the loose examples of a hypocritical professor: natural conscience will struggle, and tumultuate, and draw back, when we follow those, who pretend no other, but to go to hell: they cannot but with remorse reflect upon it, that ever they should suffer themselves to be led by such as they know to be in the ready way to damnation. But, when they see those, who

pretend highly to heaven, and entertain flourishing hopes of glory and salvation; who stand sainted in every man's calendar, and whom all conclude to be of those few that shall be saved; when they see such as these indulge themselves in any way of wickedness, they presently take heart by such an example: and, if they think not, that they may do the same with a good conscience, yet they conclude, that they may do it without any prejudice to their salvation; and so sin quietly without regret, and perish and go down to hell with good company. Well, beware, lest their sins be not at last set upon thy score: for, though they shall die in them, as the Prophet speaks, yet certainly God will require the blood of their souls at thy hands; who, by encouraging them through thy loose example covered over with a dissembled holiness, hast only made their crimes thy guilt; and shalt be punished eternally in hell, both for thine own hypocrisy and their profaneness.

(3) The unsuitable and unholy lives of professors, must needs induce wicked men to think that their ways are better than God's.

What else can they conclude, but that certainly religion and piety is some sour, morose thing; when they see those, who pretend most to it, steal away to refresh themselves with the pleasures of sin? hath not holiness delights enough within itself to content you? are not peace of conscience, calmness and serenity of mind, the love of God, the performance of duty, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, are not all these joy enough for you, but you must needs break the hedge, and stray into the world's common; as if you wanted pasture, or those pastures wanted verdure and refreshment? is not a whole Eden sufficient for you, but you must likewise taste of the forbidden fruit? What is this, but to give a most wretched occasion to wicked men, to applaud their choice, and to think it much better and wiser than yours? what a disparagement is this to religion, that those, who embrace it, must be beholding to sin and wickedness, for all the pleasant hours they enjoy! as if to sigh and weep, to be sad and melancholy, were the only employment of a Christian's life; or as if, indeed, there were not more true content and pleasure to be found in tears and sighs, in sad and serious thoughts, than in all those impure and muddy delights, for which you forsake them. No: if ever you would adorn the Gospel and win over others unto the profession and obedience

of it, live so, that the world may see a Christian can live upon the allowance that God gives him; and that you do not belong to so hard a Lord and Master, as that you must be necessitated for your work, to serve Him; and, for your recreation, the Devil. While you seek your divertisement in the pleasures of sin, wicked men cannot but think religion a mere drudgery, and themselves the only happy men; when they see those, who pretend much to enjoy God in the ways of holiness, forced to come over to their loose and sinful ways, that they may enjoy themselves. For shame, Christians! cast not such a disparagement upon religion: but let it appear, that it can maintain its servants upon its own; and hath enough not only to employ, but to delight them too.

(4) The unholy and unsuitable lives of Christians embolden others to sin more deeply and desperately, than else they would have done.

For always those, who are led by examples, make them lose somewhat of their rigour and severity. So that whatsoever scope and allowance thou givest thyself, others, who observe thy course and manner of life, will be sure to enlarge it to themselves: and so, by a wretched improvement, a small sin in thee shall become a great and heinous one in them; and thou too be guilty of it, who, by thy miscarriages, hast given them encouragement to imitate and exceed thee. Thou, who art an eminent and glorious professor, the eyes of the whole place are upon thee, to observe and watch thy demeanour: they conclude, that thou aimest at nothing less than the highest pitch and degree of glory; and, therefore, if thou canst indulge thyself such a liberty, certainly they may allow themselves a larger scope; and, though they fall short of thee, yet they hope that they shall not fall short of heaven; wherein, if they may shine but as stars, it is all they expect, while thou shinest as the sun in the firmament. This is our wretched temper, that we are not ambitious for heaven and happiness, but content ourselves if we think we may have any share and portion in it: and, while we mark the failings of those, who yet we think shall be highly advanced in glory, we are apt to conclude, that though we allow ourselves a greater freedom than they take, yet we may be safe at last, although not so glorious. Thus, a foolish vain word in the mouth of a professor, may come to be an oath of another man's: an equivocation in him, may improve to be a gross lie

in another: if he speak but slightly of religion and the things of God, others will be emboldened openly to scoff and deride them: if he carry on his affairs by underhand craft and cunning dealing, not shewing that downright sincerity and plainness in his affairs, which a Christian and an honest man ought to do; others, who observe this, will be thereby encouraged to cheat and defraud. For in the following of examples, we always bate something; and those examples, which give us any kind of liberty, we shall soon turn into licentiousness. It is a sad thing to be exemplary, unless we are also most strict and severe; so that the world can find no flaws, no defects in our conversation: for, otherwise, we must answer for their sins, which our mis-carriages have emboldened them to commit.

And thus I have, at large, shewed you, the great disgrace and discredit, which professors bring upon religion, by the unsuitableness of their lives to their principles and profession. They make the world believe it to be either false, or needless: and so they do, in a great measure, evacuate the death of Jesus Christ; make wicked men secure and impenitent in their sins; induce them to think that their ways are better than God's; and encourage them to sin more daringly and desperately, than else they would.

And yet, notwithstanding these great mischiefs, mischiefs which strike at the very life of piety and religion; notwithstanding these which follow upon an unholy conversation, what is the ordinary rate at which professors live, but vain, frothy, sensual, and worldly? yea, as far removed sometimes (I speak it with shame) from the honesty of common men, as they would be thought to be from the pollutions and impieties of the world? Now, must it not needs be a stumbling-block to many, when men shall speak at such a rate of spiritualness, as if some angel sat upon their tongues; and yet live at such a rate of vanity, and it may be of profaneness too, as if legion possessed their hearts? What shall we judge of such men? if we judge the tree by the leaves, what else can we think of them, but that they are trees of righteousness and plants of renown? but if we look to their fruits, envy, strife, variance, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, what can we think of them, but that heaven and hell are now as near together, as these men's hearts and mouths? May we not use the same speech that the Apostle doth, concerning the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 3? *Ye are yet*

carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? If the Apostle could have laid in a charge against these Corinthians, not only of envy, strife, and division, but of hatred, bitterness, and implacableness of spirit; of brain-sick opinions and self-seeking practices, joined with the utter neglect and contempt of the glory of God, as justly as we can against the men of our times: certainly, his reproof would not have been so mild as to tell them they walked as men, but rather that they walked as devils. Such are a reproach to religion; a grief and a shame to true Christians, who are jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and cannot, but with bleeding hearts, observe the dishonour that is cast upon the ways of God, by those who will be saints in spite of holiness. They are so many stumbling-blocks laid in the way of others, embittering their spirits against the profession of holiness, since they account it no better than hypocrisy and gross dissimulation; or, else, encouraging them, by their evil examples, to continue in their wickedness and profaneness.

Thus I have shewn you the First Use of Ornaments, which is to hide shame and nakedness; and that it is only a holy life and conversation, which can hide the shame of religion: for, where the life is unsuitable to the profession, it reflects this Twofold shame upon religion, that it is either Fabulous or Frivolous, either Untrue or Unnecessary. And I have shewn you the sad Consequences that will follow upon these.

ii. Another Use of Ornaments, is, TO BEAUTIFY THE PERSON, WHO WEARS THEM; AND TO SET HIM OFF TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND ESTEEM OF OTHERS.

And, thus also, it is only a holy and strict life, which can *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*. Nothing doth make religion so lovely and taking in the eyes of others, as the holy lives of those who profess it. And, to this, must we impute the wonderful growth of Christianity in the primitive times, when it gained more nations and countries in its persecuted state, than it can now gain persons in its flourishing. And the reason of its success was, that it had all the attractive charms, which are fitted to work upon the minds of men not altogether brutish: for, though it still retains the same innate beauty; the sublimeness of its mysteries, the purity of its commands, the majesty and authority of its word, the excellency of its rewards, and the

dreadfulness of its threatenings, and the clear and infallible evidence of all these; yet that, which added a mighty grace and lustre to it, was the holiness and innocency of the professors of it; their meekness, patience, love, charity, single-heartedness; and, in every respect, a blameless demeanour, which made religion wonderfully successful in the world; mankind being rather affected by the eye than the ear, and more taken by what they saw than by what they were told of the excellency of Christianity. And therefore we find, Acts ii. 45, 46, 47. that when they charitably supplied the necessities of others, when they lived together *with one accord, in singleness of heart*, they had *favour with all the people*; and many were *added to the Church*, even as many as *should be saved*. This is the way to set off religion, and to make it amiable to the world. It is not to dress it up in uncouth expressions, nor to speak of the things of God in a singular and affected phrase; no, nor only to discourse of them in Scripture-language, and to make it only the business of the tongue. The holy and everlasting Gospel, which you profess, is not an art of speaking but of living well.

First. The blameless life of a Christian gives life to religion; adds as much beauty to religion, as natural life doth to a man.

Take a dead corpse, and, though it hath the same features, the same lineaments and proportion, which it had before; yet how ghastly and frightful a spectacle is it! and that very face, which was beautiful and pleasing while living, yet terrifies and scares us, when the life and soul is departed from it. So is it here: the doctrine of the Gospel, in itself considered, separate from practice, is but a dead letter; and, though there be a great excellency in it, as there is in the frame of a dead body; yet it hath not those charms and allurements, which it hath when the lives of Christians put life into it. The strictness and severity of its rules and precepts would rather fright and deter men from embracing it, than invite them; until they see the beauty of holiness, in the practice and good example of others.

Secondly. A holy and suitable life adorns and commends the doctrine of Christ our Saviour, as it testifies the energy and efficacy, which it hath upon the consciences and conversations of men.

The excellency of a doctrine is chiefly seen in the power that it hath to work upon the hearts and affections of those who profess it. Now when it shall appear to the world, that this doctrine of Christ hath been effectual to the opening of the

eyes of the blind, the taming of stubborn and refractory sinners; that it hath been able to rend rocks in pieces, and to draw rivers of tears out of stony hearts: when it shall appear what a mighty change it hath wrought upon those, who seemed most boisterous and untractable; bringing them upon their knees to grovel in the very dust, before that God whom they have daringly offended; and that a few words of it should be able for ever after to keep them in such an awe of his Dread Majesty, that they would rather die a thousand deaths, than willingly do any thing which it forbids: when it shall calm all their passions, subjugate their very thoughts, govern all their actions; that they shall not dare to think, but by a law and rule; nor to speak, but under the controul of their religion; nor to fear, nor rejoice, nor grieve, nor be angry, but upon permission from this: how mightily will this exalt and magnify the power of Christ's doctrine, and set it forth as triumphant in the world and over the world! It is the number, not of professors, but of converts, that is the glory of any doctrine. And this glory is peculiarly due unto the doctrine of Christ: all other doctrines of the world, though there be too many who own them, yet how few are converted by them to a sober and holy life? all the grave and elaborate precepts of Heathen Philosophy, which taught virtue with a great deal of skill, and all possible advantages of wit and reason, yet, as Origen against Celsus observes, never converted but two *, from a vicious and debauched life: and, for all other ways of religion, it is generally and truly observed, that the most zealous in them were usually the most lewd and dissolute: it is true of them all, what Christ speaks of the Pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 15. *They compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, they make him seven times more the child of hell than before.* But, it is the peculiar glory of the doctrine of Christ, that those, whom it makes true proselytes, it makes truly pious. Envy not, I beseech you, this glory to it; but let it appear, that it is the only divine doctrine in the world, by having such a powerful influence into your practice, as no other doctrine hath, or can have. Raise your actions to such a divine height, that moralists, with all their civility, may be forced to confess, there is somewhat more in your lives, than nature or any other instruction can possibly bestow.

But this is only, in the general.

* Phædon et Polemon. Orig. cont. Celf. lib. i.

Let me now commend to your practice some particular duties ; wherein, methinks, the true and genuine spirit of the Gospel doth most eminently appear. And, oh ! that you would for ever remember to honour the doctrine of Christ which you have embraced, and to adorn your profession, by the constant practice of these following graces.

1. *Love, and Brotherly-Kindness one towards another.*

This is the very badge and distinguishing character of a Christian : John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.* Love is a most beautiful grace ; and that, which sets a great lustre upon religion, and makes it beautiful too. It was that, which the Heathens took most especial notice of in the Primitive Christians ; when they would not only communicate their estates one to another, but even expose their lives and offer their blood for their brethren : this made their very persecutors cry out, “ See how dearly these Christians love one another ! ” We are all fellow-members of the same body mystical, whereof Jesus Christ is the Head : now as there is a sympathy in the body natural between the members, (for if *one member suffer, all the rest suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the rest rejoice with it ;*) so ought it to be amongst Christians ; for we are *the body of Christ, and members in particular*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27. What a strange unseemly thing were it, for the members of the body to make an insurrection one against another ! for the hand to pluck out the eye ; or for one hand to cut off the other ! alike unseemly it is for those, who are united together in the same body of Christ, to be divided in their affections or practices, or to rend and tear one another. This hath been the great sin and unhappiness of our days : one limb of Christ hath torne off another, as a limb of Antichrist : some have separated, and become schismatical ; others are become unnatural, and rejoice in the sufferings of their fellows : the weak have censured the strong ; and the strong despised the weak ; and, upon such petty differences in judgment and opinion, have arisen such vast breaches in love and charity ; breaches, wide as the seas, and, without a miracle, as incurable : as if it were sufficient ground for quarrel, that one limb is not just of the same make, size, and proportion with the others. For shame, Christians ! let us all, who hold the same Head, Christ Jesus, be all united together in the same Spirit, and exercise mutual love and mutual forbearance. Or else, believe it, if the

sheep divide among themselves, and separate and scatter, the Great Shepherd will send in those dogs or wolves among them, that will make them run together again.

2. Another duty, which adorns the doctrine of Christ, and recommends it to the acceptance and esteem of others, is, *Love to our Enemies*; and a ready forgiving of the wrongs and injuries, which have been maliciously done against us.

This is a duty highly pressed upon us by the Gospel. Very few of the Heathens, though they went far in many excellent points of morality, have ever attained to this height and perfection: and therefore Tully tells us *, *ulcisci te lacesitus potes*; and, again †, *odi hominem, et odero utinam ulcisci poteram*: and Aristotle, in his Rhetoric ‡, Το τας εχθρας τιμωρεισθαι καλον δοκει, &c: “It is good,” saith he, “to revenge ourselves upon our enemies: for it is but just to return the same measure we have received; and it is manly not to be overcome in any thing.” But the Gospel hath taught us another way of overcoming our enemies: Rom. xii. 21. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*; by praying for them, by doing them all kind offices of humanity and respect. Whilst we thus manage all the differences which we have here with others, whosoever gets the better in this world; yet, certainly, at the Last Day, the victory and crown will be adjudged ours. This is that, which our Saviour Christ greatly insists on, Matth. v. 44. *I say unto you, Love your enemies: bless them, that curse you: do good to them, that hate you: and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you*: and he adds an argument, that is very cogent and enforcing, from the example of our Father: v. 45. *That ye may be the children of God: for he causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*: God doth good to all, even to his enemies; and this should be our pattern to do good also to our enemies: especially considering, that, in doing good to them, we indeed do good to ourselves; for we pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to our forgiving others those trespasses which they commit against us: but, while we keep and nourish any rancouring or revengeful thoughts, we do but put in a caution against our own prayers, and bind our iniquities upon our souls, yea and make our very prayers the most dreadful curses that can be uttered against us;

* Cicero de Oratore.

† Cicero ad Atticum.

‡ Aristot. Ethic. l. iv. c. 5. Rhetoric. c. 9.

For, if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses: Matt. vi. 15. Revenge is utterly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. As Tertullian speaks well*: There is no difference, between him that doth an injury, and him that requites it; *nisi quòd ille prior in maleficio deprehenditur, at ille posterior*; “but only that the one is wicked a little sooner than the other.” Yea, indeed, the best way of revenge, if we study that, is to requite wrongs with kindnesses and good offices: what saith the Apostle, Rom. xii. 20? *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*: by heaping coals of fire on his head, may be meant, either that thou shalt kindle in him a regret and tormenting displeasure, that he cannot vex, nor discompose thee, and so shalt make him the instrument of thy revenge upon himself; or thou shalt kindle in him such a sorrow and compunction for having causelessly wronged thee, as shall burn him like fire, until he hath given thee abundant satisfaction; or, else, lastly, thou shalt kindle upon him the coals of everlasting fire in hell, for persisting obstinately to hate and injure thee without cause or provocation: and that is a revenge to purpose; a revenge, which belongs unto him, who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it*.

3. *Patience under tribulations and afflictions*, is a grace, which doth exceedingly adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour: when we are under any chastisement from the hand of God, or any persecution from the rage and wrath of man, quietly to submit without either repining or murmuring.

A Christian should pass through the world, with as little noise and tumult as may be. Wicked men may roar and swagger in it: it is their country: but it is only a Christian's road, through which he is travelling to his country; and it were a vain and endless thing, should he stop to take up a stone, and cast at every dog that will bark at him in his passage. But, because I have elsewhere treated at large concerning this grace of patience, I shall not farther expatiate here.

4. *Humility, and Lowliness of Mind*, is a grace, which doth mightily adorn the doctrine of Christ.

And, therefore, 1 Pet. iii. 4. It is called *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*.

* Tertull. de Patientiâ.—*Ultio à contumeliâ non differt, nisi ordine. Qui dolorem regerit, tantum excusatiùs peccat.* Seneca de Irâ. cap. ii. sect. 32.

A proud, supercilious, self-conceited Christian is a monster in religion. As any exuberance and wen in the body is a great deformity and blemish to it ; so these professors, who are high-swoln and puffed up with conceit, are but wens in the body mystical ; they are but blisters, which contain nothing in them but ill humours, and bring a great deal of deformity and discredit upon that holy religion which they profess.

There is a twofold pride ; childish, and devilish.

A Childish Pride, I call that, which is conversant about the body : through which men adorn that, beyond decency ; and then think themselves by so much better than others, by how much their cloaths are finer.

A Devilish Pride is that, which lurks within : when men are proud of their excellencies and perfections ; proud of their wit, of their judgment, of their elocution, or any other of God's gifts. Yea, and pride is such a rust and canker, as can seize on the purest metals : there may be some proud of their very graces ; yea, proud of their very humility.

Now, though the former pride be more ridiculous, yet this latter is more pernicious and baneful ; and both are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and bring a blemish upon the professors of it.

There be Two things in pride, which make it so unlovely : Unsociableness, and Contention.

A proud man is an unsociable man. He looks upon all others as below him, hates a rival, and scorns to have an equal. If all will not vail to his opinion in matters of dispute, or to his humour in matters of practice, he takes himself as affronted by them ; and, because he hath given himself a kind of sovereignty over others, looks upon himself as wronged, if others will not do so too, and let him controul and govern them as the only fit and able person to do it. Hence we may commonly observe, that, though there is a kind of love and complacency between all other sinners one towards another ; as the drunkard loves his pot-companion, and seeks his company ; the thief joins himself in society with those who are thieves, and every one labours to rub his vice upon as many as he can : yet never was it seen that two proud men could agree together : for none is a greater enemy to pride in any but himself, than a proud man ; and that, because this is a vice that always seeks superiority and pre-eminence, which a proud man cannot bear in any but himself.

Again, pride is always contentious, full of strife and brawl.

And it must needs be so: for, as tumours and swelling boils in the body are very sore, and the least touch makes them ache and rage; so these swelling, proud men, if they be but at all touched in their repute or interest, yea or but in their fancy and opinion, presently rage and storm, and cannot bear, no not the least thing which they imagine to be an injury done them; for proud flesh is always tender. And, therefore, saith the Wise Man, Prov. xiii. 10. *Only by pride cometh contention.* Now how unseemly a thing is this untractable humour! how infinitely contrary to the doctrine of Christ! The Apostle commands us, Phil. ii. 3. that *nothing be done out of strife or vain-glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves:* a temper, which, when it shall please God to redeem religion from all the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon it, he will inspire into the hearts of professors. I am sure I can see but very little of it abroad in the world: no; we are grown now to that pass, that he is thought the best man, who can find the most fault and make the most strife: and whosoever hath but wit enough to make a quick and smart reply, begins to think of setting up for himself and being the head of a sect and party, and conceits himself fit to be a judge and controulour of all orders and of all offices, whether civil or sacred. For shame, O Christians! boast not yourselves beyond your own line: if you have any place in the body mystical of Jesus Christ, keep yourselves within your proportion: know your own measures, and your own bounds. If thou be *an eye*, and so canst guide the rest of the body; or if thou be *a hand*, and so art useful for the service of the body; whatsoever be thy place, thy parts, thy gifts, whatsoever member thou art, be not a swoln one: let not pride blister thee; for, if thou give way to this kind of tumours, thou wilt be so far from being an ornament, that thou wilt only be a blemish and deformity to the body of Christ.

This is a Fourth Grace, which I would recommend to you as adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour.

5. *Obedience to our Magistrates and Rulers*, doth exceedingly become the profession of the Gospel.

See what the Apostle saith of it, 1 Pet. ii. 12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God.* But how may this be done? He presently subjoins, vv. 13, 14. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as*

supreme; Or unto governors....sent by him: and observe the reason of this injunction, v. 15. For so is the will of God, that, by well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. We ought still to walk by the same rule; and, by our submission and obedience to the powers which God hath set over us, make it appear, that religion is not faction; and that, in whatsoever man's law and God's do not contradict one another, our obeying of man's is but part of our obeying of God's; who hath commanded us to be *subject unto the higher powers*, not only for fear and upon politic respects, but for conscience sake, and hath threatened all resistance and opposition with damnation: Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

6. It doth much adorn the doctrine of Christ, *to be just and upright in our dealings with men.*

It must needs be a most foul blemish to religion, when those, who profess it, shall pretend to high spiritual enjoyments, and yet neglect the duties of common and moral honesty; and be as unjust towards men, as they would be thought devout towards God. Would to God this blot were as easy to be wiped off, as it is obvious and easy to be observed! it hath made religion to stink in the nostrils of profane persons: and wrought in them such an inveterate hatred against all profession of godliness, that now the world flies and avoids all that make shew of it as dangerous people; and thinks it not safe to converse with those, who will dare once to talk of conversing with God. It is a shame and grief of heart, to hear the blasphemies which are daily uttered against holiness upon this very account: what is more common in men's mouths, than, "~~Have~~ a care how you deal with such an one! Why, he is a Saint; and will lay his hand upon his heart, and cheat you with a sigh and a 'Verily.' Well, of all men in the world, deliver me from having to do with a Saint!" I would not mention such things as these to you, did I not know them to be ordinary and common reproaches. I beseech you, O Christians, for the Gospel's sake; if not for your own credit, yet if you have any respect left for that piety to which you pretend, if any sense of the reputation of that religion for which you profess you are ready to lay down your very lives, redeem its lost honour; and make it appear to all the world, that *Yea* and *Nay* is as true a dealer, as oaths and curses. Consider that dreadful place, 1 Thess. iv. 6. *Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any thing; for that the Lord is the avenger of all such: his justice will certainly punish your*

injustice; and, though you may have an advantage, through the ignorance or easiness of those with whom you deal, to overreach them, yet, believe it, there is a day coming, wherein the false weights shall be themselves weighed, and the scanty measures be themselves meted by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly, thy bargains and contracts may proceed so with those, who are persuaded to trust thee, because of thy profession, that they can have no advantage to recover their right by Law: beware thou give them no occasion to rail at the Gospel; nor to accuse themselves of folly, for thinking that a professor could be an honest man. Remember, there is a day coming, wherein a thousand witnesses shall be produced to testify what agreements and compacts thou hast made: all accounts shall be balanced, and so much found resting due, which thou shalt certainly pay, though not to those whom thou hast wronged, yet to the justice of God, who is the Great and Universal Creditor: he is the avenger of all those, who, by wronging others in their estates, wrong them most of all in their souls, and embitter their hearts against that religion and profession which deluded them. Especially, the scandal is so much the more gross, and the wound that religion receives the more incurable; when rapine, and extortion, and injustice, shall be done under pretence of advancing the Gospel, and promoting the honour and glory of God: what is this else, but to bring him into a partnership with them, and to make him the receiver of their thefts? to transgress the law, that we might please the Lawgiver; and to be wicked for God's sake? as if it were a service done to him, to make use of the First Table of the Law to break the Second in pieces; and, that to be zealous towards God, required we should be unjust towards men. Let it appear, by your equity and justice towards all with whom you deal, that you do indeed believe that Gospel which you profess; and which teacheth you to despise whatsoever this world offers, at the price, either of a sin against your religion, or of a reproach upon it.

7. It doth mightily *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, as to be just and upright in our dealings with men, so as not to overreach and defraud them in what is theirs; so *neither to be too rigorous and strict, in exacting what is our own*.

We ought, in some cases, *jure nostro cedere*, “to part with our own right;” and, rather than be contentious, to sit down by the loss of what others unjustly take from us. Whereas those,

who will strain their right to the utmost extent, and still have recourse to the *summum jus*, “the most rigid exaction of whatsoever they can lay claim to,” if they turn not justice into oppression, yet they turn it into wormwood, as the Prophet speaks, and make it bitter and unpleasing: if they do not injury to others, yet certainly they injure themselves; and they injure the reputation of that religion they profess, which requires us not to stand upon punctilios, but to give a meek concession one to another; and votes him, who yields, both to have the better cause and to be the better man. And yet I do not condemn, where violence and injustice deprive us of what is necessary to the sustentation of life; where what they take from us is more than we can well spare, without some notable inconvenience: I do not, I say, condemn those, who seek to recover their own by legal and allowed courses: in this case, I know *the law is good*, if it be *lawfully* used: and therefore the Apostle (1 Cor. vi. 1. *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*) condemns not suing for our right, but suing for it in such a manner as to bring a shame and scandal upon the Gospel: he forbids them, in any case of difference among themselves, to have recourse to the heathen tribunals for justice; but would have other Christians to take up the matter, and compound it between them: they must not bring such a disparagement upon religion, as that the Heathens should ever know there were any differences and contentions among Christians; and therefore they must not plead for right in their courts, but choose out some of their most prudent brethren to be arbitrators and umpires between them, standing to their award. So, now, it is a great discredit to Christianity, for those, who profess it, to be always quarrelling about small things; and those little concerns, which though they may belong to them, yet it doth not belong to Christians to be contentious about them: when men shall stand upon every trivial right, and, rather than part with the least that they can call theirs, will embroil themselves and others in troublesome and endless suits; this argues, that they have not such mean thoughts of the world, as the doctrine of Christ requires, since they prefer any small and petty concern of it before Christian peace and quietness, which the Gospel hath highly recommended.

Our Saviour hath given us our rule in this case: Matth. v. 40. *If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him*

have thy cloke also : and, in the verse foregoing, *Resist not evil ; but whosoever will smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

Now because these places seem to contain something peculiar to the doctrine of Christ, I think I shall not much digress, if I give you a brief comment and interpretation of them.

Resist not evil : that is, you, who are but private men, forbear to vindicate and right yourselves according to your own discretion : for passion and self-love may make you immoderate, and cause the revenge to be far greater than the offence. But, if the injury be greater than is fit to be borne, this doth not forbid you to have recourse to the magistrate, *for he beareth not the sword in vain.* Revenge is an untamed thing : and it is well for mankind, that God hath challenged it to himself ; *Vengeance belongeth unto me, saith the Lord* ; and hath appointed magistrates, whom he calls *gods*, committing to them the dispensation of temporal vengeance, reserving to himself the dispensation of eternal.

Yea, so far must we be from being judges in our own cause, that our Saviour adds, *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also* ; which must not be understood as literally obliging us : for neither Christ himself, nor his Apostle St. Paul, invited the injuries which were done them ; but rather sharply reprov'd those, who unjustly smote them. To turn the cheek, therefore, signifies nothing else, but to bear patiently the affronts which are done us : and so we have it, Lam. iii. 30. *He giveth the cheek to him, that smiteth him* : and so it is prophesied of Christ, Isa. l. 6. that he should give his *back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair* : that is, he should suffer meekly and patiently those indignities, which were done unto him. All, that either the example or precept of Christ lays upon us, is, to bear such personal injuries calmly, and to be willing rather to suffer a second than to revenge the first. And this is far enough from that sense, which that scoffing apostate Julian put upon the words, when, commanding some Christians who were brought before him to be buffeted, he asked them in scorn, “ why they did not follow the commands of their Master, who bid them turn the other cheek also ? ”

It follows : *If any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.* Neither must this be understood according to the letter, as if we were bound to reward

those, who injure us: but, thus much it teacheth us; that, about small matters, things which we can easily be without or else easily procure, as a coat, or a garment, or the like, we should not be contentious; but rather recede from our right, than rigorously pursue it with strife and quarrels.

And, truly, this is a temper worthy of Christians. But how rarely is it to be found! Pride, and passion, and self-interest have, now-a-days, eaten out the meekness, charity, and patience of a Christian Spirit. Many hot professors there are, who, with Peter, are ready to pray for fire to come down from heaven, and consume those who offer them the least injury: and many, who are more ready to take from others what is justly theirs, than to yield up any thing of their own to the unjust possession of others: many, who would rather smite on both cheeks, than suffer on one. Certainly, Christian meekness is perished from the earth: and, if we would find any remarkable examples of it, we must turn over the ancient monuments of the Primitive Church; for our latter ages can furnish us with very few. Be persuaded, Christians, to bring this again into practice. Nothing will more commend your religion, nor set it off to the esteem of others, than this: for, when they shall see you bear notorious wrongs and affronts, with a conquering patience; when they shall see you part with your right rather than strive about it, and willingly forego those things wherein others place a great part of their content and felicity: what must the world conclude, but that certainly these men have a most excellent religion; a religion, doubtless, that assures them of far better and more excellent things than these, since it can prevail with them so easily to give up their concerns, which others so highly value! And, indeed, upon this very score, the Apostle sets it, Heb. x. 34. *Ye.....took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

This is the last particular duty, on which I shall insist, as adorning the Gospel. Many others there are, too numerous indeed to be severally discoursed of: as the filling up of our relations with the duties appertaining to them; self-denial, and a holy contempt of this world; charity and liberality, in relieving the necessities of others; a mutual forbearing to censure and judge one another, a sin that mightily abounds in this age, wherein every one thinks so much the better of himself, by

how much the worse he thinks of others; a cheerful contented spirit under every dispensation of God's providence towards us: with several others, which I cannot now stand to treat of particularly.

And thus I have dispatched the Doctrinal part of this subject: and shewn you, both what it is to adorn the doctrine of Christ; and, likewise, how a holy and pious life, that is conformable to the precepts of our religion, doth it in general, and in particular.

III. All, that remains farther to be done, is to EXHORT you thus to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; that, as you have taken up the name and profession of the Christian Religion, so you *would walk worthy* of both, and of the vocation *wherewith ye are called*.

Sensible I am, that the temptations, which lie against a strict and gospel-conversation, are many and discouraging. The careless examples of those, whom we yet think well of; the enmity of the world, which lies in wickedness, and will be sure to hate those, who, by being more severe and precise than themselves, upbraid their crimes; the reluctance of the flesh against a doctrine, which engageth us to subdue and mortify it; the rigour and difficulty of Christ's precepts, and vain hopes and presumptions of God's indulgence: are, all of them, such powerful orators, that he, who would carry it against all these, had need use very forcible motives; such as should not only persuade, but compel; and give such reasons, as should not only convince, but necessitate. But this not being in the power of man, I shall only shew you how reasonable this exhortation is, notwithstanding all the prejudices that lie against it; and doubt not, but I shall speak so much on the behalf of strict piety and godliness, that murmurings and repinings shall be the only objection left, which I must leave to the efficacious persuasions of the Holy Spirit to remove and answer.

The grounds of all, I shall lay in Two particulars:

That the profession of the doctrine of Christ, is most rational.

That it is most rational we should live according to the profession we make.

i. The FIRST I shall but briefly speak unto, because I take it as granted by all of us.

Yea, even those lewd, profane wretches, who hate the professors of religion and godliness and make them their sport and scorn, yet have not the profligate impudence to avow that it is for their profession; but pretend it is for their hypocrisy, because they do not act suitably thereunto. Yea, the very Devil himself is forced to acknowledge, that this is the doctrine, which shews unto us the way of life and salvation: Acts xvi. 17. All other religions in the world are nothing else but a fardel of ridiculous fopperies; which the Devil could never have imposed on mankind, did he not love to make men fools, and to triumph over their reason as well as their souls.

The excellency of this doctrine of Christ appears in these Three things:

In the Sublimeness of the Mysteries which it teacheth.

In the Purity of the Duties which it enjoins.

In the Transcendency of the Rewards which it promiseth.

1. *Its Mysteries are most sublime and lofty.*

And, no wonder, for in them is contained the manifold wisdom of God. A Trinity in Unity; the incarnation of the Son of God; that the Immortal God should die, and that, by his death, he should give life to the world; that his blood and sufferings should satisfy divine justice, and expiate our offences; and, indeed, the whole method of redemption, are mysteries, which far surmount the highest flight of reason: and yet are therefore the more rational, and do the more oblige us to believe them, because the same reason tells us, that that cannot be the wisdom of God, which may be comprehended by the weakness and foolishness of man.

2. *Its Precepts are most holy and pure.*

As for the idolatrous worship of the Heathens, it was barbarous, and commonly cruel or obscene; insomuch that Cato, though it was the only religion which he knew, was ashamed to be present at its solemnities. And, for the Jewish Religion, so much of it as is not incorporated into the Gospel, though there were nothing in it dishonest nor unlawful; yet it consisted in external observations, as circumcision, and sacrifices, and ablutions, which God in wisdom imposed upon them to amuse and busy them about the ceremonies of their own religion, who were

so naturally prone to fall into the idolatry of others. But the doctrine of Christ teacheth us to worship Him, who *is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth*; to employ ourselves in those works, which have an innate and inseparable goodness in them: it requires us not to circumcise our flesh, but our hearts; not to offer up the blood of bulls and goats unto God, but even our own, if it be necessary, in bearing witness to the truth and for the glory of God; not to wash our garments or our cups, but to *cleanse ourselves from all* pollutions both of *the flesh and spirit*; not scrupulously to abstain from some kinds of meats, but temperately to abstain from excess in any kind of them. This is the doctrine, which commands us to trust God with all our affairs, to take his promises for security, to love and fear him who is infinitely good and infinitely great, as the whole of that service which he requires from us. This alone reacheth to our thoughts, and to our affections: and lays the axe to the very root of our vices; judging those secret motions of our souls, which are unaccountable to any but God alone; condemning rash anger for murder, and an unchaste glance for adultery; and, penetrating into the inmost recesses of the heart, ransacks and censures all the wickednesses that lie latent there. And this shews that it is excellent above all other doctrines in the world, and only divine.

3. *Its Rewards are most transcendent.*

That, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, God hath prepared for those that love him. Other religions either speak doubtfully of a future reward, or else promise such an one as is mean and sordid; sensual rewards, fitted for brutish religions: but our Saviour Christ, after he hath commanded us to love God, promiseth us the eternal fruition of the God we love; promiseth no less for the reward of our love, than the object of it; assures us, that, after a short life spent here in his service, we shall be released from all the miseries and troubles of this life, and received up to a better; where all our hopes shall be crowned, our desires satisfied, all our past labours fully recompensed; where both soul and body, as they have been here partners together in serving God, so shall be partakers together of inconceivable happiness, our souls irradiated with the clear vision of God, our bodies irradiated with the brightness of our souls, and both for ever to remain in eternal joy and glory.

This is the religion, and the doctrine of God our Saviour.

And, judge now, whether it be not most rational to profess

it. Were there any other, that were either so mysterious in its revelations, so pure in its precepts, or so excellent in its promises, the world were not much to be blamed if it should adhere unto that: but, when all others, so far forth as they differ from this doctrine of Christ, are but rude and beggarly elements, enjoining either what is impure or unnecessary; and promising rewards abject and sordid, some of which reason itself teacheth us to hate, and some to despise; then, certainly, it will follow, that, if it be not folly to embrace and profess any religion at all, it is folly not to embrace and profess this. But, there are some deep impressions and characters engraven upon natural conscience; of the notion of a deity and a supreme power, who ought to be feared and served by us; and that it is altogether as necessary for us to be religious, in some way or other, as to be men. Many practical atheists there are, even among Christians themselves, who live as without God in the world: many such fools, who say in their hearts, There is no God; who, by having loose and erroneous opinions of a deity, serve him not as he requires: but, for a contemplative atheist, that shall set it down as his deliberate and resolved judgment, that there is no God, I very much doubt whether any instance can be given of such an one. Now, then, if, to embrace some religion be so natural and rational, if all other religions in the world fall infinitely short of the excellency of the doctrine of Christ, it remains, that it is most rational for us to believe and profess this doctrine: to own it to all the world, that we are Christians; and that the Holy Scriptures, wherein are contained all the precepts of our religion, are the rule by which we are to walk. Let us not spare openly to profess this, and to make it our continual employment to discourse of the precepts and constitutions of our Saviour's doctrine, for fear of being scorned as professors or hated as hypocrites: for, certainly, if this doctrine be in itself most excellent, the possession of it must needs be most rational; and they are only weak or malicious fools, who speak either against the one or the other.

ii. As the Profession of the doctrine of Christ is most rational, SO IT IS MOST RATIONAL TO LIVE ANSWERABLY TO SUCH A PROFESSION.

If it be most rational to profess it, then certainly it is most rational to practise it; unless we intend to be only wise in notion, and fools indeed. What excuse can such men plead for

themselves, at the dreadful Day of Judgment? Must they not needs be self-condemned, condemned out of their own mouths and by their own profession, when those things, which they have owned to be most excellent, have been most neglected by them? and that God and that Saviour, whom they have professed with their lips, they have denied in their lives?

Suffer me to lay before you these following considerations.

1. Consider, *that the profession, without the practice of religion, is but mere hypocrisy; and hypocrisy is the greatest folly in the world.*

The hypocrite dallies and plays with God; and thinks to conceal himself from those eyes, before which all things are open and bare: which is infinitely more foolish, than if one should go hide himself in a net. Thou infinitely disparagest that God, whom thou pretendest to serve: for, whilst thou liftest up thine eyes or thy hands to him, whilst thou flatterest him with thy mouth and yet thy heart is far estranged from him, thou dost but cast a reflection upon thy God; as one, that is so weak, as to be pleased and put off with fair words and empty shews. What base and unworthy apprehensions of his Divine Majesty must needs lie lurking in thy heart, whilst thou thinkest to cover over an ungodly, unholy life, with pretences of piety and devotion! thou votest with those, Psal. xciv. 7. *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the Holy One of Jacob regard it.* A hypocrite must deny, either the omniscience of God, or his justice; and, at least tacitly, conclude, either that he takes no notice of his sins, or that he will not punish them: and, so, is worse than an atheist: for, as Plutarch, though a Heathen, speaks well, That it would be a less injury done him, if any should absolutely deny that ever there was such a man as Plutarch, than if he should grant that indeed such an one there is, but that he is a fool, or unjust, or vicious, &c.; so, saith he, They speak not so ill of God, who deny there is such a being, as they do, who acknowledge him, but yet think him unwise or unholy. This, every hypocrite doth; who, while he professes there is a God, and gives this God some external homage and service, and yet will dare to be loose and vain in his conversation, unjust and oppressive in his dealings, must needs believe, either that this God doth not see him, or will not revenge. But, *ye fools, when will ye be wise? He, that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he, that formed the eye, shall he not see? He, that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he, that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that*

they are vain: Psal. xciv. 8—11. Doth not thy religion represent God to thee as the searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins? as a God, who looks quite through thee, and discerns every breathing of a thought and of a desire in thee? as an all-seeing and all-knowing God, who will bring every secret and hidden thing into open and public judgment? Live, then, according to these truths: live as always under the eye and observation of thy God; as one, who art accountable to him, not only for the more remarkable actions of thy life, but for every cogitation of thy heart, and every the least motion of thy soul; or, else, thou provest thyself to be a very fool, in not believing a religion which thou dost profess, or else in not practising a religion which thou dost believe.

2. Consider: *Thy profession hath beautified and adorned thee*: it hath honoured thee in the esteem of all serious and sober persons; who think well and speak well of thee, because of that profession and appearance of piety and godliness, which is in thee.

Now, as thy profession of the doctrine of Christ hath commended thee to the esteem and acceptance of good men; so do thou commend that doctrine to the esteem of evil and wicked men, by a life altogether suitable to the precepts of it. Sadden not the hearts of the children of God, by thy miscarriages; they have received thee as a brother, and as a fellow-member with them of the same body mystical: approve thyself, by the continued holiness of thy life, to be worthy the repute which they give thee. Never think to maintain it by any hypocritical, dissembling arts: a rotten limb will at last fall off, and stink in all their nostrils: if thy profession be not sound, thy apostacy will be most certain. Keep up the credit of that religion among wicked men, which hath given thee so much credit among the good: let them never have an occasion, through thy miscarriages, to open their black mouths, and to blaspheme the holy and reverend name of God.

3. Consider: *There is no other way left to redeem and vindicate the lost credit of your religion, but by a life suitable to the precepts of it.*

Its honour lies bleeding, and is insulted over by wicked men; who scorn and deride it, who triumph in its disgraces, and ask, “What now is become of your God, and of your godliness?” Christians, if you have any kindness for either, shew the profane world, that, even in this languishing state of religion, yet

there is beauty and lustre enough left in it, to dazzle the eyes of all who look maliciously upon it.

(1) Redeem its credit, as to the Doctrines of it.

Be not giddy, wavering, and uncertain; but sound in the faith: not *tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*. Let not every glaring delusion, every skipping light, every whiffling pretender to new notions, pervert your minds with *good words and fair speeches*, which the Apostle gives as the character of a company of deceivers in his days, Rom. xvi. 18. and agrees but too well with a great many in ours. The errors and heresies, which have thus crept in, have torn the church in pieces; and each sect and opinion hath gained so many proselytes, that, between them, they have made a great many atheists; who, seeing that Christians are not yet agreed what to believe, will themselves believe nothing; and, knowing that many tenets in vogue are false and absurd, are strongly tempted to reject all, even those that are true: as Averroes, that learned commentator upon Aristotle, refused to become a Christian, because of that monstrous error of Transubstantiation; and gave this reason for it, *Cùm Christiani adorant quod comedunt, sit anima mea cum Philosophis*: “Since the Christians eat what they adore, let my soul be among the Philosophers.” Now, Christians, retrieve this lost honour of your religion; and let it appear, by your holding *fast the form of sound words*, that the doctrine of Christ is certain in the principles which it teacheth; and that the truths of it are built upon such clear evidence, that neither the subtlety of those who lie in wait to deceive, nor yet the malice of those who oppugn them, could ever shake or make you forego your belief.

(2) Redeem the credit of religion, as to the Duties which it commands.

Let it appear, that the most severe duties which it imposeth upon you, as mortification, self-denial, contempt of the world in its pleasures, profits, and honours, are not so unreasonable nor impossible, as the world takes them to be, by your constant and cheerful performance of them. Recover again that credit, which others, or perhaps you yourselves, have formerly made it lose through a loose and vain conversation, by your holiness and strictness for the time to come. Convince the world, that debauchery is not necessary; and that the doctrine of Christ was not given, only to take up your more serious or melancholy hours: but that it is an universal rule for the guidance of your

whole life, and that it hath an influence into all your actions. Till you do this, religion must needs suffer and bleed; and, I pray God, it may not utterly expire, and die among us.

(4) Consider, for your encouragement, *that, if you thus adorn the doctrine of Christ, it will for ever adorn you*; and, as you have made it glorious in the world, it will make you for ever glorious in heaven.

This is the reward, which it promiseth. It will put a wreath of beams, a diadem of stars, a crown of glory upon your heads: *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*: Matt. xiii. 43. And therefore those, who are careful to adorn the doctrine of Christ, are but like those, who put ornaments and hang jewels on those clothes, which themselves are to wear: the beauty and lustre, which reflect from them all, redound to themselves. So we are promised, 1 Sam. ii. 30. *Them, that honour me, I will honour*. And, to shut up all, consider that place of the Apostle, Gal. vi. 16. *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God*.

A
DISCOURSE

ON

WITHDRAWING FROM SUCH AS WALK DISORDERLY.

FROM 2 THESS. iii. 6.

NOW WE COMMAND YOU, BRETHREN, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT YE WITHDRAW YOURSELVES FROM EVERY BROTHER THAT WALKETH DISORDERLY, AND NOT AFTER THE TRADITION WHICH YE RECEIVED OF US.

THESE words are as authoritative and pressing a command, as any we meet with in the whole Book of God. In them we may observe both the Matter and the Form of this injunction.

First. The Matter is, Separation from the converse of wicked and profane Christians: who are here described to be such as walk disorderly: *Ατακτως*, that walk out of line, and keep not their ranks: a word borrowed from military discipline, which requires every soldier to march in his file, and to keep that order in which he was placed by his leader.

But, because there can be no irregularity, but a rule must first be presupposed; and no disorder, where no orders have been given: therefore the Apostle farther explains whom he means, and whom he would characterize by this note of walking disorderly; and those he tells us are they, who walk *not after the tradition which they had received*: i. e. according to that doctrine, which was taught and delivered to them by the Apostles and Ministers of Christ.

And, therefore,

First. All, who commit gross and flagitious Wickedness and who live in a course of foul and notorious Impieties, are justly branded as those who walk disorderly.

Though they make profession of a holy faith, yet they contradict and enervate it by an unholy life: they take upon them the name of Christians, but yet live as without God and without Christ in the world. The doctrine of the Gospel teacheth nothing but holiness and purity: it is a *doctrine according to godliness*, as the Apostle expresseth it, 1 Tim. vi. 3: all its precepts, exhortations, promises, and threatenings, the whole drift and design of it, tend only to make us more holy, and to impress upon us some strictures of the purity of God our Heavenly Father. And, therefore, certainly, they, who live in the commission of any scandalous crimes, must needs be guilty of most wretched disorder: they break their ranks, and fly out into open rebellion; yea, while they march under the banner of Christ, they fight against their own captain, and are to be reputed not his soldiers, but his enemies.

And not only these, but,

Secondly. All, who are Erroneous and Heretical, are disorderly persons.

Others transgress the rule, but these destroy it: they pluck up the very boundaries of the faith; and deny, not only their obedience to the truth, but the truth itself. And, though they may varnish over their damnable doctrines with fair shews and good speeches; and seem to be very mortified, spiritual, and heavenly persons, that thereby they may gain proselytes, and a veneration among them: yet are they far more pernicious and baneful to the Church of Christ, than those, who are openly profane and scandalous. For, since the mind and understanding is the leading principle of man, if that be perverted, it must needs have a malign influence upon all the inferior faculties: our notions are the guide of our actions; and, consequently, an error in judgment stops not there, nor rests only swimming and floating in the brain; but challengeth the same privilege which the divinest truth hath, to direct and govern our lives, and so, by a wretched improvement, becomes a transgression in practice too. He, who hath denied the faith, must, if he will be coherent to his own principles, refuse that obedience which is consequent upon it. As a vertigo, and dizziness in the head, causeth a reeling and staggering motion in the feet; so those, who are vertiginous and giddy in their opinions, must of necessity be disorderly in their conversations: they can never walk steadily by a rule, which they deny to be so. And thus error is not only

error, but an accumulative mischief: it is error, and wickedness too.

Thirdly. And not only these, but all Turbulent and Factious Persons are disorderly walkers.

Such who rend the Church with schisms and divisions; and despise government and order, only because it is not of their own devising; and are so full of new models and new platforms of discipline in their fancies, that, in the meanwhile, they have made such wide breaches in the peace and unity of the Church, that I doubt it would much puzzle not only their overweening wisdoms, but the wisdom of an angel himself, to compose and make them up again.

And,

Fourthly. Not only these, but also all idle and impertinent Tattlers, all slothful Tale-bearers; who are very busily idle in gadding from house to house, like a company of giddy flies buzzing up and down; and who have no other employment, but very solemnly to whisper nothing in every man's ear they meet: these also are branded by the Apostle, as disorderly persons.

Indeed, a great part of this chapter is spent about these: especially v. 11. *We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies: very busy they are, but yet do no work: unprofitable burdens to the earth; and good for nothing in the world, but only to keep the air in motion.*

Now from all these sorts of disorderly persons, we ought to withdraw ourselves; to have no converse nor society with them.

Secondly, And to this we are bound by a command, as express' and urgent, as any contained in the Scriptures. The form of it runs imperatively: *We command you, brethren.* And the authority of this command is most absolute and sovereign: *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: i. e. We command you by the authority of Christ, or Christ commands you by us, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.*

And here we may observe Two things:

First. That a mere external profession of Christianity, though it be overborne and contradicted by a disorderly and sinful life, is here made by the Apostle a sufficient title to a fraternity with true Christians.

Though they walk disorderly, and are dissolute in their lives, and erroneous in their tenets; yet, while they own the Head, Christ Jesus, and make profession of his name, they are, you

see, acknowledged and called Brethren. They all belong to the same family, the Church, till they are solemnly cast out from thence. And not only the dutiful and obedient are so called, but the untractable and rebellious: *Withdraw....from every brother that walketh disorderly.*

Secondly. The Apostle commands them to be more cautious in abstaining from converse with a disorderly, lewd, or erroneous Christian, because he is a brother, than if he were an utter stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and a sworn enemy as well to the profession as to the practice of Christianity: *Withdraw....from every brother, rather than from every other person, that walketh disorderly.*

To this purpose it is a most remarkable place, and well worthy our most serious consideration, 1 Cor. v. from the 9th to the 12th verse: *I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat.* It seems, that, in a former Epistle, which perhaps is not now extant, the Apostle had forbidden the believing Corinthians all converse with wicked men: which, possibly, might occasion some trouble and perplexity in them, because, in those beginning days of the Church, the number of Christians was so small, that the very necessities of life required their converse with their heathen neighbours, who were idolaters, fornicators, drunkards, and generally as wicked as wickedness itself could make them. And, therefore, to relieve their minds of this scruple, the Apostle writes to them again; and distinguishes wicked persons into two sorts: such, as visibly belonged to the world, and were professed Heathens, whom he calls the fornicators and idolaters of this world; and such, as belonged to the Visible Church, and were Christians by an external profession, but yet continued in their old sins, though not in their old Gentilism. “Now,” saith the Apostle, “I meant not that you should wholly abstain from having any converse with wicked Heathens, though their crimes be very vile and flagitious: for, since the greatest part of the world, and of those among whom you live, are Heathens, the necessities of human life require that you should have commerce and dealing with them. You must go out of the world, i. e.

you cannot possibly live, if you be wholly interdicted their society; and debarred from those, with whom your natural relations, and secular affairs, interests, and dependencies, are so closely interwoven. But there is another sort of wicked persons: those, who are impious and scandalous Christians; those, who are called brethren, who make profession of the same common faith and own the same Lord and Saviour; and yet their lives are as profane, as their profession is holy. From these you ought to withdraw yourselves: *If any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat.*"

You see, then, that the command is most express; and that, which the Apostle urgeth with a great deal of vehemence and earnestness.

And, in prosecuting it, I shall

State the Duty, and shew you how far we ought to withdraw from those that walk disorderly:

Give you some Reasons, why we ought to do it: and Make Application of all.

I. In STATING THE DUTY, I must premise, that our condition is much different from those Primitive Churches to whom the Apostle then wrote. They lived mingled among heathens and infidels, who made up far the more populous part of all their cities: then, the Church was in the world, as a little leaven in a great quantity of meal, as our Saviour compares it, Mat. xiii. 33. But now, since the progress and spreading of the Gospel, the world (at least this part of it) is come into the Church: we live, we converse with few or none, but those, who are called brethren; and are all Christians and the people of God, at least by external profession and vocation.

And, therefore, I shall

i. Shew you THE CASES, WHEREIN WE ARE NOT BOUND TO WITHDRAW FROM THOSE, WHO WALK DISORDERLY.

1. In the first place, *As the Primitive Christians might lawfully converse with Heathens in managing their civil affairs in Traffic and Commerce, and whatsoever else was for the Necessity or*

Convenience of their subsistence ; the like converse may we lawfully maintain with ungodly and dissolute Christians.

For the reason in this case is the very same. The Apostle allowed them to company with Heathens, though they were vile and wicked ; because most of those, among whom they lived, were Heathens ; and, if this were not granted, there were no living in the world. And, therefore, now that we live among none but those who are Christians ; though the greatest part of them should be supposed to be overgrown with vice and notoriously wicked and profane ; swearers, drunkards, unclean and covetous persons : yet we may lawfully converse with them about the necessary concerns of life ; otherwise, still the same inconveniencies would press us, that we must go out of the world. We may trade and traffic with them, and perform all offices of civility and courtesy, which do not either engage us unto or demonstrate too great a familiarity and inwardness with them. Yea, the very same converse, which was allowed the Primitive Christians with their Heathen neighbours, may, by the parity of reason, in all circumstances be allowed us with dissolute and disorderly Christians.

2. We are not so far to withdraw ourselves from them, as to violate the Bonds of Nature ; or those respects which we owe, according to the Relations in which we stand towards them.

A godly Son must not withdraw himself from under the government and authority of a wicked father : and those, who are unequally yoked to wicked and dissolute persons, must not therefore assume a liberty, either of relinquishing that relation or of neglecting the duties of it, because the other is lewd and licentious. Servants must not therefore reject the commands of their masters, and refuse obedience to them because they are wicked : for this would put all the world into confusion and rude disorder. Dominion is not founded in grace. And it would be a wild world, if inferiors should acknowledge no superior, but those, who are truly and cordially subject unto God ; if servants should obey no master, but such as obey their Master Jesus Christ ; if yoke-fellows should not acknowledge one another, unless they were mystically and spiritually married unto Christ ; if children should not be subject to their parents, unless their parents themselves were the children of God. No : we ought to converse with all persons, be they never so loose and dissolute, according to the relations in which we stand unto

them: and that also, with the greatest intimacy and familiarity, and most endeared friendship that such relations do challenge from us. For the same authority, which hath commanded us to withdraw from every brother who walketh disorderly, hath commanded us likewise to love our relations: and, therefore, though they should remain obstinately wicked after all our endeavours and persuasions to reclaim them, we ought not to withdraw either our persons or our affections from them.

3. *We are not to withdraw from any wicked person, if we have great hopes and strong probabilities of reforming and reducing him by our converse.*

For this is to act the physician: and with whom should such an one be most frequent, but with the diseased? And therefore we find that our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who, by the Apostle, is said to be *separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 26. was calumniated and traduced upon this very account, because he kept so much company and society with them; and was accused by the supercilious and blind Pharisees, who could not distinguish between the leprous and the physician, as a sinner himself, because so familiar with sinners: Matth. xi. 19. *The Son of Man came eating and drinking*; i. e. he demeaned himself affably and courteously to all, accomodating himself to all their lawful actions; and they say, *Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*: and so, again, when they were captiously censuring him for eating with publicans and sinners, Matth. ix. 12. he justifies this action, which seemed so obnoxious to them, by the charity of his intention: *They, that be whole, need not a physician; but they, that are sick*: he was conversant among diseased persons, with a design of healing them; and among wicked persons, with a design of converting and reforming them. And, certainly, the same charity may justify our conversing with such: for, should all serious and pious persons withdraw from them, it would only leave those diseases, which are in themselves dangerous, altogether desperate and incurable: and it would fare with them, as too often with many poor wretches in the plague, who perish miserably; not so much from the malignity of their disease, as only for want of help and assistance.

But, yet, Two Cautions are here necessarily to be observed.

(1) That thou thyself be very watchful over thine own heart, and over thine own actions, when thou art in wicked company, even with a design of doing them good.

Else, perhaps, thou mayest thyself get infection, while thou intendest to cure it: for the soundest Christian hath corrupt humours in him, which are very apt to take the contagion. The best preservative you have is your utmost care and caution, which if you do in the least slacken, it is great odds but you will be involved in their guilt and sin; either by being drawn by their examples into the same acts, or by conniving at them when it may be fit and necessary to reprove them.

And,

(2) That you venture not into wicked company, if you have not very probable grounds to hope, that your presence among them will be an occasion to hinder their sins.

Which ordinarily you may with reason expect, if either, you have

Prudence enough to divert them: or,

Authority enough to affright them: or,

Reverence enough to overawe and shame them.

One of these three qualifications is absolutely necessary for every one, who would converse with wicked men to their benefit and advantage; either prudence, or authority, or reverence and respect. But, for any other Christian, though he be never so zealous and come fortified with never so good intentions and purposes, he is no fit man for such society.

For,

[1] It is hazardous, whether he shall be able to preserve his conscience safe, where he shall be borne down and outbraved by boisterous sinners; who will scorn to be controuled by a person, in whom there is nothing venerable but that holiness and piety, which they despise and contemn. And so he will lie under a temptation to do many undecent, if not sinful actions; only, that he may not be exposed to their scoffs and injuries.

Or,

[2] If he preserve his conscience safe, yet his very zeal and godliness will be made a prey to their taunts; and the weak, inefficacious attempts, which he makes to check their sins, will but the more enrage and embolden them. They will but sin the more, to beat him quite out of countenance; and that, out of mere despite that a person, whom they so much contemn, should take upon him to prescribe laws and orders to them: and so, instead of physicians, they will, out of a mistaken charity, prove only murderers to their brother. And this I have frequently observed

in the world to be the sad and woeful issue of it. And therefore you, who have reason to suspect, either the frailty of your nature, or the weakness of your parts and authority, beware that you venture not into such company: the best security thou canst have, is, to withdraw thy foot far from them; and to disengage thyself as soon as possible, if at any time thou art accidentally cast upon them: for, either they will wound thy conscience, or thou wilt but occasion them to wound their own the deeper. But, if God hath endowed thee with such courage, prudence, and authority, that thou canst baffle and shame the impudence of wicked men, know, that it is thy duty and a work of charity, at fit times and seasons, when God's Providence shall cast thee upon it, to converse with evil men: thou goest among them but to part a fray; wherein, though they all seem merry and very good friends, yet they are desperately stabbing, and wounding, and murdering one another by their sins: and, if thou canst either hinder any one of those blows, or cure any of those wounds, thou hast done a kind office to their souls, and an acceptable service unto God.

That is the Third particular.

4. *We are not to withdraw and separate from wicked men in the Service of God.*

We may join with them in prayer, in hearing the word, yea and in all the ordinances of Jesus Christ; and be glad that they will so far own religion, as to give it any, though but an outward and complimentary reverence and respect.

The great scruple, I know, is concerning that most sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that place before-mentioned, 1 Cor. v. 11. is here much insisted on, *with such an one, no not to eat*. Whence they infer, that, if they may not eat common bread with such as are drunkards, railers, extortioners, or unclean, &c. at their own tables; then, much less may they eat sacred bread with them at the Lord's Table. And this passeth as an unanswerable argument, to justify separation from them in this Institution.

But to this I answer,

(1) Jesus Christ himself eat his Supper in communion with one, whom he knew to be a wicked person; yea, and whom he had branded with the black name of Devil*.

* See Luke xxii. 20, 21. Mark xiv. 23.

Which, were it needful, could be demonstrated as plain as evidence itself can make any thing. But,

(2) Let it be supposed that such have no right to partake of that Holy Ordinance; yet you ought not to withdraw yourselves because of their admission, but endeavour rather to remove them.

If you do not know them to be guilty, you are most uncharitable, both in suspecting them, and in separating only upon a suspicion. If you certainly know their guilt, have you admonished them? if you have admonished them both secretly and before witnesses, and yet they still persevere in their sins, have you accused them, and before the Church brought convictive proofs of the scandal which they have given? if thou hast used this plain course, which our Lord Christ himself hath commanded towards an offending brother, Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17. there will be no need of separating; but, by this means, thou shalt either remove and eject him who hath given the offence, or clear thine own soul, and not partake of his sin in partaking of the same Holy Ordinance. If otherwise, if thou hast neither reproved the offender in private, nor accused him in public, how darest thou separate from the communion of the Church of Christ? how darest thou contradict his express order and command; yea, and think thyself the more holy and pure for doing so? Is this conscience? is this religion? is this strict piety and godliness? Nay, rather let me tell thee, it is a piece of Pharisaical pride, to separate because of their sins; and yet never reprove, never accuse them for their sins.

(3) Suppose we may not eat familiarly with such at their own tables; yet it is no consequence to argue hence, that therefore we may not eat with them at the Table of the Lord.

And the reason is, because the one is of choice; the other is of necessity, till they be cut off from the Church. I may choose my acquaintance and familiar friends with whom to converse at pleasure; and if I choose those, who are wicked and ungodly, without any charitable design upon them, I then sin, and shew myself to be such an one as delights in vain and wicked persons: but I cannot choose Church-Members, nor say I will communicate with this man, but not with this, till they are cut off from the body of Christ, unless I design to make a rent and schism in the unity of it.

(4) To cut the sinews of this objection: I answer, That, upon

the grounds already premised, it is as lawful for us to eat with wicked and disorderly Christians, as it was for the Primitive Christians to eat with lewd and wicked Heathens.

For the state and circumstances of the Church are altogether changed; and we have now none to converse with, but those, who are by name and profession Christians. And, therefore, though they should be guilty of the same sins as the old Heathens were, yet, upon the very same account that the Apostle allowed his converts to eat with Heathens, upon the very same may we be allowed to eat with loose Christians, when decent circumstances seem to require it from us. So that if we take this prohibition of the Apostle literally, we may safely affirm that it was but temporary: or if we take it analogically, and by rules of proportion; so it forbids us nothing but an unfit and unnecessary familiarity with wicked persons; and so, indeed, we hold its obligation to be perpetual.

Thus then I have shewed you the cases, wherein we are not bound to withdraw from those, who walk disorderly: not in managing our civil affairs, and necessary concerns of this life: not if we are bound to them in near and mutual relations: not if our converse may be profitable and beneficial to them: nor, lastly, in the worship and service of God.

ii. Let us now consider the Positive part of this duty; and shew you, IN WHAT CASES, AND HOW FAR, WE ARE BOUND TO WITHDRAW FROM THEM.

1. *We are bound to withdraw ourselves from all unnecessary converse and correspondence with wicked and ungodly men.*

We are not to make them our bosom friends, nor our chosen intimates, nor to have society with them, more than either the necessity of our affairs, or a charitable design of doing them good exacts from us. And this I take to be the genuine and true import of the text: Company not with any brother that is vicious and debauched; i. e. be not his intimate and familiar: give him no countenance by seeking or embracing his acquaintance. We ought not to choose nor select such to make them our friends, our confidants, or privados. But if, upon other accounts, we are obliged to converse with them, then, although the letter of this command reacheth no farther than this, yet by the same reason we are obliged

2. *To withdraw from them our inward respect and esteem;*

setting them low in our affections, and accounting but meanly and slightly of them.

This the Psalmist gives as a character of those, *who shall dwell in God's holy hill*: Ps. xv. 4. *In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.* They have learnt to judge of things and persons as they are. And, though they may have many great advantages of wit and parts to adorn them, yet these things dazzle not their eyes: but they know that it is but an Ignis Fatuus, which makes all this blaze; a thing made up of earthy and sordid vapours, whose extraction is base, whose employment pernicious, and whose end deplorable. Alas! how can he highly value a company of slaves, whom he sees busily turmoiling in the Devil's drudgery! How can he but nauseate those swine, which wallow in their mire; and those dogs, when he sees them licking up their vomit! He knows, that such as these are vile in the sight of God; and it would be a strange dissonance if they should be dear to him, whose affections ought to be conformed to his Heavenly Father's.

3. *We ought to manifest this inward dislike, by our outward demeanour*; and to let them know by some overt acts, that they are a company of persons for whom we have no great esteem nor value.

We ought to put a vast difference, between our converse with those who are sober and serious Christians, and those who are lewd and profane. Indeed, if we have no great love nor esteem for them, this difference will soon appear of itself: for let two pious Christians converse together, how presently are their souls touched with a mutual sympathy! and that holiness, which knits them both unto Jesus Christ, knits them likewise one to another: their communion is sweet and free; no reservedness, no disgusts, but as full of joy, as it is of innocence; and their souls seem to be as much one another's, as their own. But let a person, whose vices have made him odious, intervene; and his presence (like that, as they say, of evil spirits) brings a damp and suffocation with it: presently, their joy is stifled, their freedom restrained: they shrink and retire within themselves; and treat him with a visible coldness, and an inward constraint and reluctancy. And, indeed, we ought to shew a kind of aversion towards wicked men, when we are in their company; that it may appear, that neither they, nor their converse, are acceptable to us; and that we are, as it were, out of our proper element, whilst we are engaged in their society. So we find that holy

David resolves to witness his dislike, whenever he should chance to be with evil men: Ps. xxxix. 1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me*; i. e. I will lay a restraint upon myself: my words shall be but few and sparing, that it may appear such company is not at all grateful to me.

But, here, let us beware of running into extremes. For many men may be apt to take that for the zeal of their spirits, which indeed is only the frowardness of their temper: and so, instead of a holy dislike, may express only a proud disdain of wicked men; and, by the sourness of their humour, fright them, not only from their converse, but from their religion too, which they are ready to censure as the only thing that makes them thus crabbed and ill-natured. And, therefore, to both these particulars of lessening our love and esteem, and the signs and testimonies of it towards wicked men, we must add these following cautions.

(1) Thou oughtest heedfully to distinguish between thy brother's person and his vices; and neither love, nor hate, the one for the other.

For he, who loves his person for his vices, is a devil: he, who loves his vices for his person, is a flatterer: he, who hates his vices for his person, is a murderer: and he, who hates his person for his vices, is unchristian and uncharitable. And, therefore, Lev. xix. 17. God forbids us to hate our brother in our heart, although he be such an one, whose frequent sins may give us frequent cause sharply to rebuke him. And therefore St. Austin gives us a good rule; *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xiv. cap. 6. *Nec propter vitium oderit hominem, nec amet vitium propter hominem: sed oderit vitium, amet hominem*: "Neither let any hate the man, for his vice's sake; nor love his vice, for the man's sake: but hate the vice, and love the man." For, indeed, couldst thou but cure his vice, there is nothing in thy brother but what is lovely and amiable. It is, I confess, a very difficult matter to carry our love and our hatred with so even a hand, that they shall not one intrench upon the other's object. And, truly, I know but one only method how it may be done; and that is, by using our utmost endeavours to reclaim and reform our brother: for, thereby, we do, at once, both express our hatred against his sins, by seeking to root them out and destroy them; and our dearest love to his person, by seeking his eternal welfare and salvation. But, believe it, if we take any other course of expressing our dislike, than what in probability may be beneficial to our brother and tend to reduce him, we do not only declare

our hatred to his vice, but to his person, from which we ought never to withdraw our tenderest affection: and, therefore, to rejoice at his miscarriages; to report them needlessly to his disparagement; to upbraid him spitefully with them, not seeking his amendment, but his shame and our revenge; is too true a sign, that, be our hatred never so great against his vices, yet it is not little also against his very person.

That is the First Caution.

(2) Another caution is this. We must not so far withdraw the testimonies of our respect and esteem from the most wicked person on earth, as to deny him that civility and respect, which is due unto his place: nor to refuse him the offices of humanity, which that common nature we are all partakers of, doth challenge from us.

The one is not religion, but rudeness; and shews not so much zeal, as want of breeding: the other is barbarous and unnatural; with which the Satyrist justly taxeth the stubborn Jews,

Non monstrare vias, quæsitum ostendere fontem. Juven. Sat.

That they would not shew the way, nor direct a thirsty traveller to a fountain, if he were not of their religion. But, certainly, religion doth not teach men to be surly and churlish; but it is the most gentle, the most obliging and affable thing in the world. It is beautiful to see Christians kind and respectful to all, in their deportment; taking all opportunities to be helpful and beneficial, even towards those, with whom they refuse familiarity. This their ready willingness to do good to the worst of men, will be a most effectual means to bring up a good report upon their profession; when it shall appear, that nothing but their conscience and their religion prompt them to it. Our outward deportment towards others is to be regulated by outward respects, as well as our inward veneration by inward excellencies. I owe not so much ceremony to a mean man, although truly gracious; as I do to a great man, though impious and profane: the one shall have my hat; the other shall have my heart. Certainly, it is but a sullen humour, and not religion, that teacheth any to deny accustomed and due respects. Festus, though an unbeliever, shall be *most noble*; as well as Joseph of Arimathea *an honourable counsellor*, though it be added in his stile, that he *waited for the kingdom of God*. Though some wicked men should be equally great in crimes, as in power; yet

I ought to pay their place and their quality my reverence, whilst I reserve my veneration and esteem for the poorest saint.

That is a Second Caution.

(3) When, I say, that we ought to withdraw our love and affections from wicked and ungodly persons, we must observe that there is a twofold love: a love of benevolence, whereby we wish well to the party beloved, and endeavour to promote his good; and a love of complacency and friendship, whereby we take delight in him. We ought to love all wicked men, who-soever they are, with a love of benevolence; cordially desiring their good and welfare; labouring, what in us lies, to forward it: but, generally, we ought not to love them with a love of complacency, delight, and friendship.

(4) We are to withdraw from wicked men, our love and the expressions of it: not absolutely, so as not to love nor esteem them at all; but only comparatively, so as to love and esteem them less.

And that, in a Twofold comparison.

[1] If we are not related to them, to esteem them far less than we do others, who are truly sober and serious Christians.

Our delights should be in such, as are the excellent ones upon earth: and we should, in all our demeanour, put a visible difference between our deportment towards the one and the other, that it might be seen, that my converse with the one is only out of charity or necessity, but with the other out of delight and a free unconstrained choice. And,

[2] If we are nearly related to them, and by that bond are perhaps obliged to love them more than any other persons in the world; yet also we must love them less in comparison, if not to others, yet to themselves.

There are some natural and some civil relations in which we stand, that challenge from us a love and esteem of the highest nature, though the persons be never so wicked and impious: and if we do not love and honour them above all other persons in the world, we sin. And yet we must love them comparatively less, because of their vices: not, indeed, less than other persons; but less than we should else love, and honour, and esteem themselves, were they truly virtuous and holy. Natural and civil relations are a strong and inviolable bond of love and respect: but, yet, where true grace and real godliness are to be found, there the union of our souls should be closest and most endearing; and this double cord, both of grace and nature,

should knit us straiter to them, than where only one of these doth tie the knot : and we should, in a wise and obliging manner, let them know, that, though we respect and value them as they are, above all earthly enjoyments ; yet our respect, love, and valuation of them would be far greater than it is, could we but prevail upon them to be other than they are.

These are the Cautions, which I thought fit to give you.

And thus I have done with the First General ; the Stating of the Duty, how far, and in what cases we ought to withdraw from the company and converse of wicked and ungodly men who walk disorderly.

II. The Second is, to give you some REASONS, which may enforce this duty to you.

And, indeed, it being a duty that seems so rough and morose to the too sociable and compliant humours of most men, it had need be backed with very cogent motives and reasons. And such I doubt not but to produce.

i. IT IS AN ACT OF THE GREATEST LOVE, AND MERCY, THAT WE CAN SHEW TO THEIR PERSONS.

We are not to separate from them out of spite or peevishness, but out of good-will and charity ; it being the last, and probably the most effectual means to reclaim them : and, therefore, as the Church is empowered by Christ to draw forth its last weapon against obstinate and contumacious sinners, and to cut them off from its fellowship by the dreadful sentence of excommunication (which power is given her, not for the destruction of any, but for their edification ; that they may thereby be brought to a sight of their sins, and repent for them) ; so also that personal power, which every private Christian hath over his own converse, to refrain from the society of such as walk disorderly, should be used by him (with the rules and cautions before prescribed) towards those, who are otherwise incorrigible, as a charitable means to reduce them from their sinful ways ; that, when they see themselves thus banished, and, as it were, excommunicate from the company of all those who are sober and serious, they may be moved to reflect upon their actions, and to return both to themselves and to God : and therefore the Apostle gives us this command, 2 Thess. iii. 14. *Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* And, indeed, if a

man be not altogether profligate in wickedness, if he be not wholly lost to bashfulness, it must needs make him blush to think, that he should be grown such a vile wretch, that all good men should carefully shun the very air in which he breathes, and the places which he haunts, as contagious and infectious. The truth is, whatsoever company a wicked man keeps, it proves a snare to him: for, by his familiarity with evil men, he is but tempted to more and greater sins; and, by good men's familiarity with him, he will be shrewdly tempted to security and self-confidence under his sin and guilt: he will argue with himself, that, "Certainly, such men, who are reputed holy and pious, would not converse with me as they do, did not they think well and entertain a good opinion of me. Were such and such sins so black and horrid, as some few sour people would fain persuade me, these godly people would shun my company, as unworthy of them; and would avoid me, as a person both noisome and dangerous: and therefore, doubtless, I may keep my sins, and yet go hand in hand with them to heaven; for, if we part not by the way, I hope we shall not part at the journey's end." And so they are hardened in their sins; and you, by keeping company with them and not reproving them, prove the ruin and destruction of their souls: whereas, did you but withdraw yourselves from their society, it is probable that the very shame of seeing themselves forsaken, and left as it were lonely and desolate in the world, would at length work in them a hatred of those crimes, which they see so detested by others. And thus we should only leave them for a season, that we might afterwards enjoy them for ever.

That is the First Reason.

ii. Consider THE GREAT DANGER YOU ARE IN, OF BEING YOURSELVES DEFILED WITH THE CONVERSE OF WICKED AND UNGODLY MEN.

There is no plague, no leprosy in the world, so catching, as that of sin: for,

1. *Our hearts themselves are naturally corrupt.*

There are in us the latent and lurking seeds of all manner of wickedness: we should therefore beware, how we venture an evil heart amongst evil examples. The Devil hath a strong party within us, that watch all advantages to betray us: and, if thou wilt needs be gadding abroad, to observe the manners and

fashions of the world, beware thou be not caught and ravished, and sent home with a wound and dishonour. And,

2. *It is the glory and impious pride of wicked men, to rub their vices upon as many as they can.*

They would fain make all like themselves : and it is much to be doubted, if thou venturest among them, that, as thou art more prone to be infected than they are to be cured, (for sin is natural both to them and us, but so is not grace) ; so also they will shew more zeal and forwardness to debauch and corrupt thee, than thou wilt to reform and reclaim them. Nay, indeed, it cannot be otherwise : for they will look upon thy sobriety and seriousness, as a severe upbraiding of them for their dissoluteness and profaneness ; and, so, to ease themselves of such a troublesome reflection, would fain banish that virtue which reproacheth them, and therefore will be earnestly persuading thee to do as they do and be as they are. And, I believe, the very best Christians will find it a very hard task, when they are engaged in such company, to keep themselves pure and unspotted ; when they have so many disadvantages against them, as an evil nature within to prompt them, and evil examples and enticements without to allure them. In this respect, certainly, there is not so much danger in conversing with wicked Heathens and Infidels, as there is with wicked Christians : for, as physicians observe, that diseases sooner infect those who are of a blood, than those who are strangers one to another ; so is it, likewise, in the moral diseases of the soul : the vices of a brother, of one who is called a Christian, are more dangerous and contagious, than of a stranger and alien ; inasmuch as the sameness of profession is apt to make us less suspicious and wary of his actions. And, when we both own and embrace the same religion, we are apt, first to favour, and then to imitate his deeds : and therefore the Apostle commands us, especially to *withdraw...from every brother that walketh disorderly* : and that, if not out of charity to him, yet at least we should do it out of care to our own souls ; for we are in danger to be led aside by their evil examples. And how many have returned from such converse with bloodied consciences ! their poor souls have long lain languishing under those wounds, which they have received in the house of their friends ; as the Prophet speaks, Zech. xiii. 6.

That is the Second Reason.

3. Consider : *Our society with lewd and wicked persons may not only involve us in their guilt, but also in their punishment.*

And, indeed, it is but reason and equity, that we should be partners with them in the one, as well as in the other: and therefore we have that threatening, Prov. xiii. 20. *A companion of fools shall be destroyed.* Nay, though we could keep ourselves from their crimes, yet our society with them may justly expose us to their plagues: and that, because our very converse with them is sin enough to provoke divine justice against us; which, finding us in the same herd, may well drive us to the same slaughter. And therefore we see how earnestly Moses cautions the Israelites, to separate from the rebellious company of Korah, and his associates: Numb. xvi. 26. *Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins:* and so, again, Rev. xviii. 4. where the destruction of the Mystical Babylon is foretold, God warns his people to come out of her; *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* And therefore you ought, for your own interest and security's sake, to abandon the company of wicked men, unless perhaps you intend to perish with them for company.

4. Consider, that, *if no other punishment overtake you, yet the very society of such must needs be a continual burden and vexation to all those, who are truly conscientious and tender-hearted Christians.*

So that, if not for your security, yet at least for your own content and satisfaction, you should think yourself obliged to desert the company of those, who must needs be a perpetual grief and torment to you. Thou, who hast any reverence for the Holy Name of God; any veneration for the mysteries of the Gospel, and the truths which thou professest; any love and esteem for piety and godliness; any respect for temperance and sobriety; with what pleasure canst thou converse with those, who impiously tear and rend the Holy Name of the Great God with their hellish oaths and curses? who deride piety; and all who profess or practise it? who make it their business to overthrow the faith, and expose the Sacred Oracles of God and mysteries of religion, upon which all thy hopes for the future are built, to public scorn and contempt? who are only witty when they are profane, and learned when they are atheistical? whose mouths are frothed with lasciviousness, and whose most familiar dialect is ribaldry? who are continually abusing themselves and God's better creatures, by their excess and intemper-

ance; and boast of it as a heroic achievement, how many they have felled by the downright valour of their riots? Are these companions, fit for thee, who callest thyself a Christian, and makest profession of that religion which requires purity and exact holiness from all its votaries? canst thou find any pleasure in such society? If thou canst, thou thyself art not only one of them, but worse: for so the Apostle accounts those, who have pleasure in such wicked persons: Rom. i. 32. But, if thou hast but one spark of grace under all that flame of devotion of which thou makest shew, thou wilt be so far from taking delight in such company, that it will be the greatest burden and vexation of thy life: and, when thou hast heard thy God dishonoured, thy religion abused, thy holy Gospel denied or derided; and seen all the abominations to which wrath, lust, and luxury prompt those, who are slaves to these filthy passions; thou wilt return home with a sad and heavy heart, and find abundant cause to weep over their sins, though thou hast reprov'd them, or thine own if thou hast not. And what a folly then is it, voluntarily to make thine own life uncomfortable; and, by seeing and hearing, vex thy righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds! Indeed, if thou art constrained to dwell amongst such, it is thy affliction; but it is thy sin, if it be thine own choice. It were altogether as pleasant an abode, to dwell among lions, and bears, and tigers, and all the ravenous beasts of the forest. See how David complains of it, Ps. lvii. 4. *My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*: and see how passionately he bemoans himself, that he was under the sad necessity of conversing with such persons, Ps. cxx. 5. *Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!* If thou art constrained to this unequal converse, either through God's Providence casting thee among such, or through the necessity of thine affairs or relations, thou oughtest to look upon it as a sore and heavy affliction; and wilt find frequent occasion, in the anguish of thy troubled spirit, to cry out, "Woe is me, that my soul dwells among lions, that I sojourn in the tents of wicked and ungodly men! that ever I should reside in those places and among those people, where the name of God is daringly blasphemed, the ways and worship of God impudently derided; where I hear nothing but oaths and curses, and see nothing but wicked examples!" Certainly, if

thy heart be true and upright before God, this will be thy perpetual torment: but if thou needlessly makest such converse thy choice, it is not only thy suffering, but thy sin too.

5. Consider: *Thy converse with lewd and ungodly men will be a very great hindrance to thee from doing thy duty.*

Art thou to perform any duty of religion, in the worship and service of God? thou wilt find that there is no such check to the freedom of thy spirit, as the presence of wicked persons: who watch all we do; and, with a malignant eye, wait for some advantage to scoff and taunt us for it: so that our holy zeal and ardour will be very much damped, through the sinful awe that is upon us, of offending them. Is it any common affair of thy life, which thou art to transact? if thy interests be much interwoven with theirs, it is hard if they do not importune and prevail with thee, to put in some of their bias; and persuade thee to do somewhat, that either is dishonest or indecent. Art thou invested with power and authority, as a magistrate? how hard will it be for thee, to punish the crimes of those, whom thou hast made thy companions and associates! how hard to administer justice impartially, against all the solicitations of thy wicked acquaintance; who will be ready to plead on the behalf of the guilty, only because they are so! Art thou an inferior? how hard will it be to preserve thyself free and untainted from the vices of those, upon whom thou livest and dependest! And so, in every state and condition of life, we shall find that converse with wicked and ungodly men will prove to us, either a mighty temptation wholly to neglect our duty, or a great impediment to a conscientious and right performance of it.

6. Consider, that *thou hast other company to keep; and needest not to be beholden to wicked men for their converse.*

(1) There are good men, whose company and acquaintance we should covet and desire.

And, thanks be to God, that, though these are but thinly sown in the world; yet there are but few places, where our lot may be cast, but some one or other may be found, whom we may make our guide and our companion to heaven. And, though they should be but one or two, yet these are enough to take sweet counsel together: these are enough to make thy bosom intimates and familiar friends. The rest, thou mayest lawfully converse with, for thy necessities: those, thou shouldest select, for thy choice and delight. Or,

(2) If all others should be wicked and profane, and thou

shouldest live like Lot in Sodom, no righteous person in the place but thyself; yet art thou not left desolate and solitary. Hast thou not a good companion in a good conscience? a companion, which thou always carriest about with thee.

This is such company, as a wicked man dare not keep. Alas! there is nothing but chiding and brawling at home: a quarrelsome conscience, corroding guilt, ghastly reflections, pale fears, terrors, despair, self-accusing and self-condemning thoughts; so that hell would be almost as quiet an abode for him, as his own conscience. And therefore he keeps most abroad; and converses with any thing, rather than with his own heart; and complains of being forsaken and solitary, if he hath not some to divert him from minding the troublesome discourses of his own conscience. Whereas, with a godly man, all is quiet and calm at home: he can take his heart aside, and commune with it; and entertain himself with a silent joy. And certainly, he, who hath such a serene, pure, and pacified conscience, can never complain for want of good company. Nay,

(3) Thou mayest, every where, and at all times, keep company with the Great God of Heaven and Earth.

And he will make one with thee: and then thou mayest say, as our Saviour did, *I am not alone, but I and my Father*. Certainly, that soul hath a strange gadding humour, and is not sociable but wanton, whom the company and communion of God himself cannot satisfy. Such as these would certainly have repined to have been the first in heaven; and would have thought Abel himself not compleatly happy, who had there none of his own rank to converse with.

And, thus much, for the Reasons or Motives to this Duty; for, in a practical subject, reasons and motives are the very same.

III. Suffer me to close up all, with a brief word of APPLICATION.

I shall but mention what might be more largely insisted on.

i. Ought we thus to withdraw from those that walk disorderly? Then, LET NOT WICKED MEN CONDEMN CONSCIENTIOUS CHRISTIANS, AS IF THEY WERE PROUD, OR SCORNFUL, OR UNSOCIABLE.

Know, that it is not out of pride or humour; but only out of charity to thee and care of themselves, that they dare not keep

thee company. They are far better friends to thee, than those, who help thee to consume away thy precious time, and damn thy precious soul. They pity thee: they pray for thee: and will be ready to contribute their utmost assistance to thy advantage. Change thou but the lewdness and dissoluteness of thy life, and thou wilt quickly find them to be the most affable, courteous, and complaisant companions in the whole world.

ii. Must we withdraw from every one that walketh disorderly? LET THIS, THEN, SERVE TO BREAK ALL KNOTS AND COMBINATIONS OF WICKED MEN.

God, the great Master and President of all Societies, hath prescribed us the rules of our converse; which, if it be not regulated according to the measures he hath given us, is no longer to be called a society, but a confederacy and conspiracy against heaven. The first and chief thing to be regarded in all company, is, the company itself; which, if it be impious and debauched, we ought as carefully to avoid, as we would a common pest: for the Devil hath no such artificial method of insinuating vice into the minds of those, who are of ingenuous and facile natures, than first to toll them into the haunt of wicked and lewd persons; for custom usually begets liking, and that imitation. Know, therefore, that it is thy indispensable duty to separate from all thy loose and ungodly companions, unless thou intendest to keep them company to hell, and there burn together in unquenchable flames. Think how these wretches, who now hug and embrace one another, will then fly in one another's faces; and, with fearful outcries, charge their damnation one upon another: one, for enticing; the other, for consenting: one, for plotting; the other, for executing.

iii. Here SEE THE MISERY OF THOSE, WHO ARE WICKED.

God hath so low and vile esteem for them, that he not only thinks them unworthy of his presence in heaven, but of the converse and society of saints here on earth.

iv. LET IT BE FOR EXHORTATION, TO THOSE, WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS, THAT THEY WOULD WITHDRAW THEMSELVES FROM ALL THAT WALK DISORDERLY.

The Motives and Arguments, which might persuade you to
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this, you have heard already. I shall, therefore, only give you a few Helps and Directions.

1. *Get your hearts much off from those things, in which wicked and carnal men are permitted to abound.*

For these are the baits, that draw and allure you to their company. There is scarce any person, who loves another, only because he is wicked; but because of some advantage and secular commodity, which he hopes and expects from him. Now when we can overlook all their temporal preeminences, their wealth, their honour and interest, and the like, from which we might expect any profit to ourselves, we shall not be in much danger of being inveigled by a person, who hath nothing to recommend him but his vices; nor by those vices, which have nothing to recommend them, besides their own deformity and ugliness.

2. *Be as little beholden and engaged to wicked persons, as possibly you can.*

For the receiving of courtesies from them, will seem to oblige you in gratitude to converse with, yea and sinfully to humour them.

3. *Let them see that you are persons of most undaunted courage and resolution; who will not be afraid of the face of any man alive, but will boldly reprove them as often as they dare to sin in your presence.*

For this will be the means, either effectually to reform them, or at least to make thy company the less acceptable to them; and so to deliver thee from the danger of theirs.

v. Let me add one exhortation more: and that is, that THOSE, WHO ARE TRULY PIOUS CHRISTIANS, WOULD SO DEMEAN THEMSELVES, THAT ALL, WHO HAVE ANY INGENUITY IN THEM, MAY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR COMPANY IS FAR MORE DESIRABLE, THAN THE COMPANY AND CONVERSE OF LEWD AND PROFLIGATE PERSONS.

1. *Walk so, that men may see there is a reality in your principles, and that your practice is agreeable to your profession.*

For this brings a great credit to religion, and is a beautiful and charming thing in the eyes of all. That man must needs render himself grave and considerable, who professeth what is true, and practiseth his profession.

2. *Let them find an evenness and constant tenor in your life and conversation.*

Be the same in your houses, as in the church; in private, as in public: for nothing doth so much ingratiate a man in the reverence and esteem of others, as to be constant and suitable to himself in all occurrences.

3. *Epecially labour to outstrip wicked men, in those commendable things, wherein they seem most to excel, and by which they gain upon the affections of others to their ruin.*

As,

(1) Some wicked persons pretend to be very exact in doing the works of Justice, in giving every one their due.

And it is sad to consider, how they trample upon and triumph over the profession of religion, upon this very account; that many, who have pretended highly to it, have been found notoriously guilty of rapine, extortion, and deceit. Now, O Christians! gain this ground of them: and make it appear, that you are as just towards men, as religious towards God; that neither you, nor your Gospel, may be evil spoken of.

(2) They brag much of their Courtesy and Affability towards all.

And, indeed, by this very act, they draw many into their society and the snare of the Devil. Be you, therefore, kind and obliging; and use all the honest insinuations which you may, to win others, first to a love of your persons, and then of virtue.

(3) They boast much of Love and Agreement among themselves.

Which, though it be very false, yea and impossible, that those, who do not agree in God, who is Love, should ever cordially agree in loving each other: yet, because they maintain a kind of league and confederacy among themselves, whereby they draw others to join with them; therefore let true Christians, who are all united to Christ Jesus by faith, be likewise united one to another by love. Shall the members of Satan agree, and not much more the members of Christ? Never cast that shame, either upon your Lord and Master, who is the Prince of Peace, or upon his Holy Gospel, which is the Gospel of Peace: but, by the endearedness of your mutual affection one to another, win over others to the obedience of the truth; who will be much the sooner persuaded to it, when they are once

convinced, that, only in the society of true Christians, they shall find true friends, and such as will most sincerely and cordially love them.

(4) They boast much of their Charity and Good Works; how liberal they are in relieving the wants and necessities of the poor.

Let them not carry away this glory from you. But, *as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all*, and thereby lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven; till we come to our own, that is, our heavenly country, where we shall be repaid with abundant interest and advantage: where we shall converse with God and with Christ, with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: where we shall for ever be freed both from the contagion and trouble of wicked company: where we shall, with infinite joy and satisfaction, embrace the society of those good men with whom we have here taken sweet counsel together, without fear of disunion or separation, when both they and ourselves shall be made infinitely better.

SUBMISSION TO RULERS :

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT CHRIST'S-CHURCH IN DUBLIN, JAN. 31, 1669.

FROM 1 PET. ii. 13, 14.

SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO EVERY ORDINANCE OF MAN FOR THE LORD'S SAKE : WHETHER IT BE TO THE KING, AS SUPREME ; OR UNTO GOVERNORS, AS UNTO THEM THAT ARE SENT BY HIM FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL DOERS, AND FOR THE PRAISE OF THEM THAT DO WELL.

WERE nothing else required to a Day of Humiliation, but the solemnity of public sorrow and a sad review of former miscarriages ; if a fast did only lay a tribute upon our eyes, and tears were the whole amercement of our crimes : I myself should have judged the text now read, much improper to the occasion ; and should rather have chosen some of those passionate lamentations, that might have opened a fountain in every eye to flood this place, and turn it into a Bochim. But, because the best sorrow is amendment, and reformation the truest repentance, I therefore thought our most unfeigned mourning for a slaughtered monarch, would be to learn and practise our duty to the living.

I believe there are none of us here, but do, from our very hearts, detest and execrate that horrid villainy, which we this day bewail ; and account those hands accursed, which were so impiously embrued in the royal and sacred blood of their sovereign and God's anointed. Let us therefore testify our abhorrence of that bloody crime, by our present submission : and, by our cheerful obedience, if not expiate the sin and guilt ; yet, in some measure, redeem the credit and glory of these nations.

I have therefore pitched upon these words of the Apostle, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, &c.*

And they are one of those many rules prescribed in this latter part of the chapter, for the right ordering of a Christian conversation, that it might be blameless and inoffensive.

For, though it were both the primitive principle and practice, in all lawful things to yield ready obedience to the will and command of their magistrates; and, in all unlawful, cheerfully to devote themselves to sufferings: yet, as appears by their Apologies, they were clamoured against by the Heathens, as heady and seditious, authors and leaders of factions, disturbers of the public peace and pestilent enemies to the state.

This accusation was altogether undeserved; and indeed incongruous, both to their temper, and the rules of their profession. It was a very unlikely thing, that THEY should aim at worldly greatness, whose first entrance into Christianity was the renouncing of the world: that THEY should embroil the state in rebellion against their prince, who never lift up their hands, but in prayers to God for him: that THEY should intend to get the sovereignty and dominion to themselves, who never thought of any other crown but of martyrdom; and that, which followed upon it, of glory. They were not such martial and fighting Christians, as the men of our times.

And we may well wonder, if this generation, who have been so hot and fiery about little circumstances; and thought the debate of a rite, or the mode of discipline, cause enough to warrant arms, and blood, and the ruins of kingdoms; if they had lived in those Primitive and Apostolical Days, how they would have comported themselves under the tyranny and cruelty of their heathen emperors. Certainly, if only a conceit and fancy of superstition could now levy armies, and draw out the sword against those, who were acknowledgedly of the same doctrine and faith with themselves; who held the same Profession, the same Baptism, the same Head, the same God, the Father of all, and agreed in all the substantials of one and the same Religion; we may well think that they would have flown out into all the extremities of blood and violence, when no other choice lay before them, but either death or idolatry. Those, who could now think it lawful to depose and murder a Christian King, would, no doubt, have thought it meritorious to assassinate a Pagan Persecutor. The Church had been then militant in another sense than it was: and Christ might have had many Hectors, but few martyrs.

No, the mild and calm spirit of the Gospel taught them

otherwise. Flying or dying was their only refuge; and prayers and tears, their only weapons. To read the histories of those first days of the Church, is but to wade so far in blood. Such multitudes perished, of each sex, of all ages, by wild beasts, by fire, by the cross, by the sword, by all the witty cruelties* that rage could invent or power execute, that it is a wonder there were persecutors enough to destroy them; and a far greater wonder, that there were any left to succeed in the profession of the same faith.

But it was here true, what one of them said, *Sanguis martyrum est semen Ecclesiæ*: “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church †:” whence sprung up such a numerous company of Confessors, as, by their invincible patience, not by opposition and resistance, wearied out their tormentors; who had not strength enough to inflict, what the Christians had strength enough to suffer. Yea, so thick was this seed sown, that St. Jerom ‡ assigns no less than the blood of five thousand martyrs to every day in the year; only excepting the first of January from so deep a Rubrick.

And that, which I cannot but account the hardest and sorest trial of their patience, was, that whensoever it pleased Almighty God to send any notable plague upon the world, as sickness, or drought, or famine; whensoever the sea or rivers broke out, or a worse deluge of barbarous and savage nations broke in upon the Roman confines, straight the outcry of the rabble was, *Christianos ad leones*: “Away with the Christians to the lions:” as Tertullian witnesseth in his “*Apologetic*:” straight the anger of the gods must be appeased with the blood of Christians, who, for refusing to sacrifice, must themselves be made victims.

Now, though it be a great provocation to become turbulent and seditious, when men are causelessly suspected, and punished as such already: yet, saith our Apostle, though you are so dealt with, spoken against, and persecuted as evil-doers, herein shew yourselves to be Christians, who aim at greater matters than what your emperors are jealous you will attempt to take from them; and be not only victorious in your constancy under

* *Quid sentis de carne cum suppliciis erogatur, enisa reddere Christo vicem moriendi pro ipso, et quidem per eandem crucem sæpe, nedum per atrociora quoque ingenia pœnarum?* Tertul. de Resurrect.

† *Ligabantur, includebantur, cadebantur, torquebantur, urebantur, laniabantur, trucidabantur, et multiplicabantur.* Aug. de Civit. Dei. l. xxii. c. 6.

‡ Hieron. Epistol. ad Chromatium et Heliodorum.

sufferings, but loyal also in your obedience under suspicions and false accusations. Though *they speak against you as evil-doers*, as it is v. 12. yet *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake*.

The words contain in them ;

An authoritative Command of obedience: *Submit yourselves*.

The Object, to which this obedience must be yielded: *Every Ordinance of Man*.

The Division of this ordinance of man into supreme and subordinate: *Submit to the King, as supreme*; and to *Governors* sent by him, as subordinate.

The Duty of all governors, and the end of all government expressed: and that is, *The punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well*.

The Motive, which enforceth this exhortation and command: *Submit to them for the Lord's sake*.

There are but two terms in the text, which require explanation,

The one is, what is meant by *every Ordinance of Man*.

The other, what force lies in that abjuring expression, *for the Lord's sake*.

As to the former; *Every Ordinance of Man* may be taken, either, 1. For every Edict and Constitution, every Law and Command, which issues forth from those who are in authority over us: called, therefore, an ordinance of man, because en-
vigorated by human authority. Or, 2. It may be taken for Magistrates themselves. And, indeed, thus it ought to be understood in this place. And so the sense is this: Whatsoever lawful form of magistracy or government you live under, Submit yourselves unto it. And it is here called an *Ordinance of Man*, *ἡτις ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπινη*, a human creature; not as though magistracy were only a human invention, or a creature of man's making: for, so, St. Peter should contradict St. Paul, who tells us, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. *There is no power but of God: the powers, that be, are ordained of God*. And he, that *resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*. But yet this ordinance of God is here called an ordinance of man, both because it is appointed among men and for the good of men; and because, likewise, the several forms of government were at first modelled, as human prudence and convenience dictated. Magistracy is an ordinance of God, in respect of its original institution; but it is an ordi-

nance of man, in respect of its particular constitution and modification.

Then, as for the motive, Submit yourselves *for the Lord's sake*; this can bear no other sense, than upon the account of God's command, as you would do an acceptable service to him. And it is tantamount to that other place, Rom. xiii. 5. *Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath*, i. e. for fear of the prince's wrath, and the direful effects that may follow upon it in case of disobedience; *but also for conscience sake*, i. e. because of those obligations, which lie upon conscience from God's commands. For nothing can be done for conscience sake, which is not done out of respect to God's authority; who is the only supreme Lord of Conscience, and hath strictly bound it to all duties of submission to his under-officers and vicegerents upon earth: so that disobedience to the *ordinance of man* rests not there, but becomes rebellion against God himself. Princes rule by virtue of God's commission and authority: they are his lieutenants in the world; and, therefore, to disobey them, is to rebel against that sovereign and divine authority by which they reign.

Hence, therefore, let us observe; That obedience to earthly kings and governors is a duty we owe to them; and not to them only, but to the Great King and Governor of Heaven and Earth. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake.

Man was at first created after the image and similitude of God; and one great part of that image consisted in his dominion over the creatures. But kings, in this particular, approach much nearer unto the divine resemblance, and have fairer strokes of this image drawn upon them, than any other men: they are raised in power and sovereignty, not only over the brute and irrational creatures, as others are, but over men themselves; and are lords of those, who are lords of the world. As Adam was therefore like unto God, because inferior to none but him; so are they. The image of divinity is so conspicuous in their dominion and sovereignty, that, upon this very account alone, God takes them into co-partnership of that glorious name, whereby himself is known: Ps. lxxxii. 6. *I have said, Ye are gods*: whatsoever they be for other endowments, whether virtuous or vicious, persecutors or favourers of religion; yet, in respect of sovereignty and dominion, they are the visible and lively images and portraits of God upon earth. Now as a contumely or dishonour done to the image or statue of a man, redounds only to the dishonour of the person whom it represents

(and therefore states, to punish those, who are either dead or fled out of their reach, have been oftentimes known to execute their pictures) so it is here: disobedience to the lawful magistrate reflects contempt upon God himself, whose image the magistrate is; and, by despising government, and speaking evil of dignities, men only invent a way how they may rebel against and depose God in effigy.

But it is not my design to make a panegyric, in magnifying kingly power; but rather to give some instructions concerning that submission and obedience, which we owe unto it upon the command of God.

Never, certainly, was it more needful than now, rightly to state how far and upon what grounds we are obliged to obey the powers that God hath set over us. Which possibly we may gain some light to discern, by a thorough sifting of these following distinctions.

We must distinguish of Rulers:

For they are either Lawful Magistrates or Usurpers. And, blessed be God, that we may now, without danger, make such a distinction as this is.

As they, so their Commands may be either lawful or unlawful.

Obedience to their lawful commands may be considered as due, either in point of Prudence, or else in point of Conscience.

Obedience in point of conscience, is either Active, in performing what is required; or Passive, in suffering what is threatened.

I. Out of these Distinctions, I shall form several PROPOSITIONS, resolutory, as I hope, to my subject in hand.

i. NO SUBJECTION IS DUE TO AN UNLAWFUL AND USURPING POWER, UPON GOD'S COMMAND AND FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.

Some, of late years, who have been mighty loth to dispute titles against their present interest and advantage, have earnestly opposed this assertion; affirming that usurped power, though it be unlawful in the acquisition, yet becomes so far lawful when acquired, as to oblige conscience itself to submission. A strange and absurd opinion this! as if that became lawful by being accomplished, which was wicked and sinful in being but attempted. Then must prosperous wickedness hereafter be taken for virtue;

and the only way to justify a bad undertaking must be to go through with it. No: it is not a rude, boisterous power, which may perhaps be like an irresistible torrent, and bear all down before it; it is not this, but right and title, which invests a magistrate. Magistracy and authority is too sacred a thing to be entailed upon the longest sword and the strongest arm. And, certainly, if actual possession of sovereignty can make good any usurper's title unto it, and make him the power ordained of God; by the same reason may any plead title to your houses and estates, who can, either by force or fraud, make entry upon them.

But yet, as absurd as this doctrine is, Scripture is alledged for it: and, of all, that place is especially insisted on, Rom. xiii. 1. *There is no power but of God: the powers, that be, are ordained of God.* Hence they collect, That the very being or existence of a power makes it the ordinance of God, and obliges even conscience itself to obedience.

But here, it is not the Apostle's intent to assert, that the being of a power makes it lawful; but that those lawful powers that are, are God's ordinance and appointment.

And this appears,

1. Because the word *ἐξουσία*, which is here translated *power*, is not any where used in the New Testament, but only to signify *Authority, and a Lawful Power*,

Yea, when the Devil himself used it, Luke iv. 6. he would willingly have had our Saviour understand him in this sense. And, not to insist on this, the very notation of it from the verb *ἐξίστι*, *licet*, proves the only proper use of it to be for Lawful Power.

2. This *power*, which the text speaks of, is such as may not be resisted. *Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they, that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation: v. 2.*

But that power, which hath no title to sovereignty besides present possession, may be lawfully resisted, without the sad doom of incurring damnation for so doing. What frequent instances have we in the Book of Judges, of the revolutions of the Israelites' affairs! often in the possession and under the oppression of their neighbouring kings, till God raised them up deliverers to rescue them from that bondage and slavery; they did not think they were, for conscience or for God's sake, bound to obey the usurping powers they were at times under: no;

though their usurpers might plead sometimes twenty, sometimes forty years' prescription to strengthen their title. Not to instance in all the particulars I might, for that would be too tedious, what shall we think of Jehoiada's proceedings, not only in resisting, but in deposing and putting Athaliah to death? clear it is, that she had the sovereignty in possession, and stood seised of it above six years; yet none, I hope, will affirm, that Jehoiada resisted God's ordinance or incurred damnation, by deposing her and restoring his rightful prince. Again,

3. Since the only title that an usurper hath to sovereignty, is his resisting and destroying the lawful power, it will follow, *that a damnable act, as this is, may of itself confer a lawful power, if invasion or possession alone can make it such.*

Which is an opinion so wild, that sobriety and reason abhor it. It is true, indeed, many have been rightful sovereigns, who ascended the throne by flagitious crimes, and the murder of their predecessors: but yet the title could never be devolved upon them by their wickedness, but either by elective or hereditary succession. They have resisted and destroyed the lawful powers, only to make way for their own title to take place: but never can it be conceived that rebellion should give a title; or that God should give a man such a form of deputation, as doth at once confirm his authority and seal his damnation. It is evident, therefore, that lawful sovereignty is not founded upon actual possession, but a fixed and settled right; and, consequently, wherever an usurping power is advanced, neither God nor conscience requires submission to it.

And, yet, to give the contrary opinion some plausible colour, it is here objected, that those very persons, whom the Apostle speaks of, and whom the believing Romans ought not to resist upon pain of damnation, were but usurpers; the Cæsars intruding, by force and violence and the ruin of the commonwealth, into the supreme authority.

To this may be answered; That, not to dispute their right in first seizing the Roman Empire, which possibly (as I think in most, if not all other governments) might be unjust enough: yet it is as certain and as clear as history can make any thing, that they were, by the free votes both of Senate and People and all the authority of that state, settled and acknowledged for their rightful magistrates, and enjoyed the title and power for some succession of emperors, before the Apostle wrote this Epistle, And therefore obedience was due to them, upon the

account of conscience, and for God's sake. But it no way follows, that because the powers that then were were God's ordinance, that therefore every power that is at any time existent must needs be so too.

That is the First Position.

ii. UPON PRUDENTIAL AND SELF-PRESERVING PRINCIPLES, SUBMISSION MAY SOMETIMES BE YIELDED TO THE LAWFUL COMMANDS OF AN UNLAWFUL AND USURPING POWER.

Lawful commands I call them, not as though such had any right to command; but because they may command that, which is right and lawful to be done. Now, though it be every man's duty, by all likely and probable means, to endeavour the suppression of an usurping power; yet prudence, and that sovereign law of self-preservation, must dictate to him the way and manner how it may be accomplished: which till it be found feasible, it is but precipitateness for any man to oppose himself naked and defenceless against armed violence. This rashness doth but throw away a life, which, if preserved till fairer opportunity presents itself, might become greatly serviceable to the rightful prince: and, instead of deposing, doth but secure the usurper; alarming him against the future attempts of others, to which confidence and security might else expose him. And therefore Jehoiada did not declare against Athaliah, till he had engaged the officers of the army; and laid his combination so, as reason might vote it would prove successful.

But enough, and too much already, of usurped powers.

Therefore,

iii. WE OUGHT TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF THE LAWFUL MAGISTRATE, IN THOSE THINGS, WHICH ARE IN THEMSELVES NECESSARY TO BE DONE, AND OUR INDISPENSIBLE DUTY; AND THAT, NOT ONLY OUT OF CONSCIENCE TO GOD, BUT ALSO OUT OF CONSCIENCE TO HIM.

Such are all the duties of the Law of Nature, and of the written Law of God, which the magistrate ought to enforce upon us by his authority: for he is *Custos utriusque Tabulae*: "The guardian of both Tables of the Law." And, though the duties therein prescribed, do beforehand bind the conscience to the practice of them; yet also is the guilt of transgressing them aggravated by the addition of the magistrate's command: and it is no contemptible security added to the laws of God

when they have a guard of human laws set about them; and none can violate the laws of God, but he must also wrong and violate the authority of his prince. As, for instance: we ought to worship God after a right and due manner; we ought to honour our parents, to abstain from theft, murder, and adultery; though there were no human laws to require it from us: but yet, when the magistrate shall interpose his authority and enjoin the very same, these duties lie then more pressing and binding upon our consciences: for then the strength of divers commands is put together into one; and we are doubly obliged to these duties, both by those laws of God which expressly require them, and also by another law of God which requires obedience to our magistrates. Of this, I think, there is no doubt at all made; and, therefore,

iv. IF THE THING COMMANDED BE INDIFFERENTLY LAWFUL, AND APPEAR SO TO US; that is, if it be in its own nature such as we may either do it, or not to do it without sin; THEN ARE WE TO BE DETERMINED BY THE MAGISTRATE'S COMMANDS, TO DO WHAT HE REQUIRES, AND TO ABSTAIN FROM WHAT HE FORBIDS.

For though, after the magistrate hath interposed his authority, the thing remains in itself still indifferent: yet it no longer remains so, as to our practice; but it is a sin in us, not to do what lawfully we may when he requires it. For I suppose a magistrate hath a greater command over his subjects, than any father hath over his children: since the magistrate is the Common Father, *Pater Patriæ*; and children are bound to obey him rather than their parents, when their commands contradict one the other. Now which of you doth not assume to himself such an authority over his child, as to think him bound in duty, to do that, upon your command, which, before you commanded him, was merely indifferent, and might either be done by him or not done? The same obedience, therefore, which you expect from your children in things indifferent, the same you owe to your prince, and the authority that is over you.

And therefore it is a most absurd opinion, which some have taken up, that things, in themselves indifferent, become unlawful when imposed: as if that were unlawful to be done, when commanded, which was lawful to be done, even without a command; or any thing could be lawful, when only permitted, but sinful, when enjoined.

And, as it is hugely absurd and irrational, so it is very

dangerous and pernicious: for it cuts the very sinews and plucks up the very roots of government. It cashiers and abrogates the far greater part of all human laws; and abridges the magistrate's authority in enjoining any thing, but express duties, commanded before of God in Scripture.

And see what a wild consequence will follow upon this tenet. For if things, indifferently lawful, become sinful, when imposed; then, by the same reason, they must needs become necessary, when they are forbidden: and so, consequently, whatsoever of this nature the magistrate shall forbid, men must look upon themselves as bound in conscience to practise. And what monsters lie in the womb of this consequence, any understanding man may at first glance perceive: what is this, but to spell the magistrate's authority backwards; and to give him that power over your consciences by his prohibitions, which you deny to his commands and injunctions? This tenet, therefore, is most ridiculous, most foolish, and most pernicious.

We ought then, in all things which are in themselves indifferent and appear so to us, to give ready and cheerful obedience to the commands of our lawful magistrates; and that, for the Lord's sake. And, here, they are not little prejudices, nor little inconveniences, because such a command crosseth my former customs or my present humour, that can supersede my obligation.

No; nor is it lawful, without very great and pressing reasons and almost a necessity, to choose the passive part of the command; to undergo the penalty, rather than fulfil the precept: and that, because the penalty is only annexed, as the secondary will of the magistrates, to enforce the precept; nor doth the law primarily aim at punishment, but at conformity to it. This is to be accounted the will of the magistrate, whose will is our obligation in all things that are lawful and indifferent. And therefore to choose the penal, before the preceptive part of obedience, without very weighty and necessitating reasons urging us thereunto, cannot altogether be excused from disobedience; because it comes not up to that conformity, which the magistrate principally intends.

That is the Fourth Position.

V. IF THE THING BE INDIFFERENTLY LAWFUL IN ITSELF, BUT APPEARS DOUBTFUL UNTO US, AND WE CANNOT RESOLVE OURSELVES WHETHER IT BE LAWFUL OR EVIL; I THINK WE ARE

OBLIGED, till we receive clearer light and information, TO TAKE THAT PART OF THE DOUBT, WHICH THE MAGISTRATE COMMANDS US, AS BEING THE SAFEST AND MOST SATISFACTORY TO CONSCIENCE.

And my reason is this: because the obligation, which lies upon us to obey the magistrate's commands, is certain; but the unlawfulness of what thou doubtest is not so: and therefore his authority ought to preponderate with us; and make that our undoubted duty, which was before but a doubted and suspected sin. Indeed, the Apostle tells us, Rom. xiv. 23. that *whatsoever is not of faith*, i. e. whatsoever is not done or forborne with a rational persuasion of the lawfulness of doing or forbearing it, *is sin*; and that *whosoever doubteth, is damned if he eat*: but, in this case, the magistrate's commands do not engage thee to do any thing doubting, but rather will solve thy doubts, and disentangle thee from the snare in which thy conscience was held. For though the nature of the thing be not at all changed by his commands, yet thy doubtful mind may be well settled: for, upon his command, thou hast reason to think that thy duty, which before his command thou couldst not absolutely conclude to be a sin.

That is a Fifth Position.

VI. IF THE THING ENJOINED BE IN ITSELF SINFUL AND UNLAWFUL, OR AT LEAST APPEAR SO UNTO US, THEN TAKE THESE TWO FOLLOWING RULES.

1. *We ought not, upon any pretences or inducements whatsoever, to yield Active Obedience to such a command.*

In this case, that plea of the Apostle's holds good, and will do so for ever, Acts v. 29. *We ought to obey God rather than men*: and, Acts iv. 19. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye*. And, in this case, it was not rude nor uncivil, but a noble and truly heroic answer, which the Three Worthies gave unto Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 18. *Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up*. For, when princes' commands contradict the commands of God, they carry no authority in them to enforce our active obedience; no more than the commands of an inferior magistrate do, when they contradict the laws of the supreme. Yea, we are not to yield active obedience, not only when their commands are expressly against the commands of God; but when we are verily in our own consciences so persuaded: for con-

science rules us in God's name, and whatsoever it dictates it believes to be the very will and mind of God; and, therefore, to slight the voice of conscience, is interpretatively to slight the voice of God; and those, who will not follow the voice of conscience when they believe its dictates to be the will of God, would not follow them though indeed they were so. But, then, we must be sure that we have express word and warrant from God; and not take up with doubtful and obscure texts, and more doubtful and remote consequences, to dispense with us from that obedience, which is evidently and frequently required.

But,

2. *Though we may not yield active obedience to the unlawful commands of our superiors, yet we are bound to yield Passive Obedience to them.*

For all human laws consist of a precept and a penalty. Where the precept may not be obeyed, yet the penalty must be submitted to, with all patience and quietness, though it reach to the loss of our estates, or of our liberty, yea, the dearest of all our possessions, life itself; unless we can prudently withdraw ourselves, and avoid their rage by flight.

That is the Sixth Position.

vii. WE OUGHT, IN NO CASE WHATSOEVER, TO RESIST AND REBEL AGAINST THE LAWFUL POWERS, WHICH GOD HATH SET OVER US; yea, though they should use their power unlawfully: for *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they, that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.*

As it is in the government of a state or nation, if any inferior magistrate abuse his power over thee, thou art not presently to oppose him by any violent or illegal proceedings; nor to make any insurrection against him, and pull him off his tribunal, or divest him of his authority; but to appeal to the prince and supreme magistrate, for redress of those wrongs: so likewise here, if the supreme magistrate should abuse his sovereign power, and command thee to do what God, his superior, hath commanded thee not to do, and shall punish thee for not obeying him and offending God; thou art not to resist, nor make conspiracies against him, nor to raise tumults and seditions to depose him from his authority; but only quietly and meekly to appeal unto God, who alone is his judge and ruler, and to beg

him to take thy cause into his cognizance, and redress thy wrongs and injuries.

Yea, put the case as high as we can: suppose that Christian subjects should live under the dominion of a prince, who, as he is a God in respect of power, so he is a Devil in respect of cruelty and mischief: suppose the two worst cases that can befall them:

That he should enjoin them superstition and idolatry.

That he should oppress them by persecution and tyranny.

If ever there were a specious pretence for subjects to say, Shall I smite him, shall I smite him? it is in this supposition. Here seems the best cause, and the highest equity in the world, to deliver the world from a monster, and the Church from a devil. Yet, I say, neither of these can justify rebellion against him, or revenge upon him. Was there ever a more accomplished and consummate wretch than Nero? a man, who made the martyrdom of Christians his pastime; and burnt them in the streets of Rome to light him from the stews*. And yet St. Paul commands the Roman Christians to submit to him for conscience-sake, and threatens them with damnation if they resist. No, we ought in this case (though it be far from the fiery spirit of our times) to receive blows, but not to strike again; and rather to endure the greatest of cruelties, than lift up our hands to revenge them.

And, indeed, there is a great deal of reason for it.

For,

1. *Punishment is an act of vengeance.*

Now revenge is such a wild untamed thing, that God hath not trusted it in any private hands; but reserved it to himself, who can best dispense and govern it: vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it: Rom. xii. 19. So that none ought to intermeddle with this part of justice, but those, whom God hath impowered thereunto, and made his substitute officers and ministers to dispense it; and that is only the magistrate: Rom. xiii. 4. *He is the minister of God....a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* None are to be revengers, but God and magistrates: magistrates, upon evil men; and God, upon

* *Pereuntibus (Christianis) ludibria addita, ut ferarum tergis contexti, laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus affixi aut flammandi; atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis uterentur.* Tacit. Annal. l. xv.

evil magistrates. Private Christians have nothing to do with revenge, or punishment: no, not to inflict it one upon another; much less upon their rulers: and, if they do, as they rebel against men, so they usurp upon God, and put themselves in his stead.

2. *Princes are supreme to all but God; and therefore accountable to none beside him.*

All human power is subordinate to theirs, and derived from it: for from the chief, do other magistrates receive their authority and commission; and therefore cannot any human power punish those, on whose authority they depend.

3. *What a wide gap for all manner of confusion and disorder, would this open to the world!*

Who, that fancies himself aggrieved and wronged, would not presently make a party, and sound the trumpet, and proclaim that he had equity and justice on his side, and so hurl all into tumults and wild confusion? But, though thou mayest have suffered real injustice; yet thou oughtest not to rebel. The Wise Man hath long since condemned the striking of *princes for equity*: Prov. xvii. 26. whether for their equity's sake, or thine. And the Apostle reckons it the glory of a Christian, and an acceptable service to God, patiently to endure when we suffer evil for doing well: 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21. *What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

Yea, even religion, the best and most precious of all our enjoyments, is too weak a cause to justify rebellion and insurrections. To think, that, upon the account of religion, or any form or mode either of worship or discipline for which men are zealous, they may lawfully oppose, yea and depose the authority that God hath set over them, is a tenet utterly irreligious. And, truly, religion can never so much suffer by the fiercest persecution, as by such wild and rebellious principles. It is a doctrine quite contrary to the true genius and constitution of Christianity. In the primitive times, for the long space of three hundred years, till at length the Roman emperors gave up their names to Christ, those, who commanded the whole world, set all their wit and force to crush this growing doctrine, but were still dis-

appointed in this attempt. Whence this defeat? was it because they were overborne by the too powerful resistance, which the Christians made against them? nothing less: for though almost every city, every village, every family, yea their camps and armies abounded with Christians, as Tertullian witnesseth in his “Apologetick*”; yet, under all those savage and barbarous persecutions, which butchered them up like sheep appointed to the slaughter, we never read of any insurrection against the lawful magistrate.

Nay, the Fathers boast and glory of this conquering patience of the Christians; and challenge the Heathen to produce any one instance of a mutiny or sedition, wherein a Christian was engaged†. Notwithstanding their vast numbers, which might make them potent; notwithstanding they were all devoted to ruin and destruction, which might make them desperate‡; and despair added to power makes it invincible: yet we read of no tumults, no uproars, no wars raised by them in the state; for the peace and prosperity of which they prayed dying; and took the sword rather into their throats than into their hands: nor was it their method to propagate Christianity and true religion, by any other blood but their own.

This was the way, by which the Primitive Church thrived: which sent more Christians to heaven, and gained more to be Christians on earth, than ever the pomp and splendour of it hath done since.

* *Si enim hostes apertos, non tantum vindices occultos agere vellemus, deesset nobis vis numerorum et copiarum? Plures nimirum, Mauri et Marcomani, ipsique Parthi, vel quantacunque unius tamen loci, et suorum finium gentes, quam totius orbis? Externi sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum: sola vobis relinquimus templa. Cui bello non idonei, non prompti fuissetus, etiam copiis impares, qui tam libenter trucidamur, si non apud istam disciplinam, magis occidi liceret quam occidere?* Tertul. Apol.

† *Circa Majestatem Imperatoris infamamur; tamen nunquam Albiniani, vel Nigriani, vel Cassiani, inveniri potuerunt Christiani. Tertul. ad Scapulam. Unde Cassii, et Nigri, et Albini? unde qui inter duas lauros obsident Casarem? Unde qui faucibus ejus exprimendis palæstricam exercent?—De Romanis, ni fallor, id est, de non Christianis. Tert. Apol. vid. Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. xxii. c. 6.*

‡ *Non nos adversum te, Imperator, armavit ipsa, quæ fortissima est in periculis, desperatio. Tenemus ecce arma, et non resistimus; quia mori magis quam vincere volumus, et innocentes interire, quam noxii vivere præoptamus. Exuperius, Legionis Thebææ signifer, ad Maximinian.*

This was the true evangelical spirit, which taught them to obey their magistrates' commands in what was lawful; and in what was otherwise, either prudently to avoid their rage by flight, or patiently to endure it by dying. They had not learned that Lirry, that the Saints are the only Lords of the world: that all the Ungodly (and all must be such, whom they pleased) were but Usurpers and Intruders upon their Rights: that they must "Overturn, overturn, overturn," to make way for the kingdom of Christ; intending, no doubt, to set themselves, one at his right hand, and another at his left, in that his kingdom. The doctrine of the Gospel taught them not these violent and rebellious principles: but it is as full of peace as it is of purity; and instructed them to acknowledge their magistrates' authority, to pray for their prosperity, to obey their commands cheerfully, or quietly to suffer punishment: and this, though they had abundant provocation to resist, and probability of being successful. Much more damnable therefore is it, when there is no such provocation given; when religion, and piety, and justice are only pretended; when godly princes discharge their conscience and their Christian duty, in the government committed unto them: much more damnable is it, I say, yea damnable to the utmost degree of damnation, for subjects, upon every whimsical discontent, to resist, imprison, depose, and murder them; while they cheat and cozen the world with the pretences of saints, but do the works of devils.

II. And, now, had this doctrine been more pressed and more pondered of late years, **WE HAD NOT THIS DAY HAD THIS SAD OCCASION TO BE HUMBLLED FOR THE UNPARALLELED WICKEDNESS OF YESTERDAY.**

A day it was, that, were it not that it afforded us an opportunity to testify our abhorrency and detestation of that bloody villainy which it once saw, we might well wish that the year would skip it over; and imprecate it, as Job doth the day of his birth, Job iii. 3, 4, 5. *Let that day perish....let it be darkness: let not God regard it....neither let the light shine upon it: Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; and a perpetual cloud dwell upon it.* A day, that hath brought an indelible blot and infamy upon these nations, and made us a reproach and scorn to the whole world; and, what is worse, hath exposed religion itself to contempt and hatred, and made it a reproach to scorers, who, whilst

they saw those very men, that so highly pretended reformation and the power of godliness, embrue their hands in royal and sacred blood, have been ready to conclude, that to profess religion is nothing else but to seek a varnish and colour for some black and horrid wickedness. This hath rendered the reverend name of godliness, despicable and odious to profane spirits; who, whilst they saw none privileged to act their rapines, revenge, injustice, and most wrongful usurpation and tyranny, but those whose mouths were as full of a glorious profession as their hands were of wicked deeds, have charged all those impieties upon the score of religion, and made it bear the burden of those crimes with which it is not consistent.

It was once the glory of the Protestant Religion, that it taught subjects to account the persons of their princes sacred and inviolable; supreme to all under God, and accountable to none but him: and, possibly, this one doctrine hath been no small advantage to make it gain so much ground in so short a space. But, now, our adversaries triumph in the shame of our profession, when the most notorious regicides, who not only avow the doctrine, but publicly perpetrate the fact of deposing and killing a king, are found among those, who pretended to be at the greatest distance from Romish principles and practices.

There is, indeed, a great difference between the doctrine of a Schism, and the doctrine of a Church; between the practice of a Nation, and the practice of a prevalent Faction in the nation. And, blessed be God, we have this still left to silence the recriminations of all antichristian adversaries, that, to depose and assassinate kings, is not the doctrine of the Protestant Church, but of the Romish Synagogue. And, as it was not the doctrine of the Church, but of a Schism: so neither was it the fact of the Nation, but of a rebellious and prevailing Faction in it; nor could their armed violence reach the head, till they had first destroyed the body both of Church and State.

But it is not the work of this day to excuse any; but to stir up all to bemoan this bloody and horrid crime: a crime, the most horrid and accursed, that ever was acted under the sun, but only when a miracle eclipsed it from looking on. Though the histories of all nations abound with the sad tragedies of their lawful princes assassinated by their subjects: yet we may still remark, that their wickedness was either so timorous or so

modest, as to endeavour to hide the blood they shed; and durst not be otherwise guilty, but with those advantages of night and secrecy, which might make them appear innocent.

But, here, royal and sacred blood is theatrically spilt; and the fact avowed by the impudent pomp and solemnity of villainy. Villainy so profligate, that it scorned to proceed in a clandestine manner: but, as it was resolved to out-do all the examples of former regicides; so to outface all, that should dare to oppose or condemn it. And, therefore, to add ceremony and scorn to murder, they erect a pageantry of justice: summon the Throne to appear before the Bar; arraign Majesty, before which awe and reverence should have made them tremble; condemn him for their own crimes; and execute that wicked sentence, with all the ostentation that triumphant spite and malice could invent.

And that, which makes all this the more odious and execrable; all this was transacted under forms of justice, and specious pretexts of the glory of God and the interests of religion. Here, the Faith bleeds, together with the Defender of it: religion itself suffers, by the vile hypocrisy of those, who pretended to a higher strain of godliness in practice and reformation in discipline, than yet the world had ever known. And it is likely to suffer an eternal reproach, so long as there are any Popish Blasphemers, to cast it into the teeth of Protestants, that they never thought their religion pure enough, till it was washed in the blood of a Christian King, of the same profession with themselves. O prodigy of wickedness! that ever justice should be pretended to the committing of a crime so full of dread and horror, that it might well puzzle and nonplus justice how to punish it, and mercy how to forgive it! that ever the increase of true piety and the advancement of the honour of religion, should be made a colour to the shedding the blood of a king; a fact, that gave religion the most mortal wound that ever it received, since it was first planted in the world by the blood of our Saviour! And yet those sacred names, the Purity of Worship, the Reformation of Abuses, the Honour and Glory of God, Law and Justice, and the due Liberty of the Subject, must be made a stale by those men (who could not else have successfully acted such a devilish part, unless they appeared like angels of light) to promote an impiety, whose direct design and natural consequence was to overthrow and root them all out: and, when they had cast out and slaughtered, not only their

brethren, but their common father, set up their cry with those hypocrites in Isaiah, *Now the Lord be glorified*: Is. lxvi. 5.

And as this fact was in itself most impious, so it was most fatal in all its train of consequents. Nothing, but ruins and mischiefs; extortion, distraction, sacrilege, injustice, the blood of many and the tears of all; personal, domestic, and public evils; rents and divisions at home, scorn and contempt abroad; have almost ever since followed, one upon the neck of another: and, would to God they were so little felt and known, as to need recounting! Nor, indeed, was it fit, that so horrid a crime should have any better attendants. And, truly, how could it be otherwise, where oppression and violence were the only legislative power? where anarchy and tyranny, the two extremes of government, were always striving for the upper hand? where our lives, liberties, and estates depended only upon the rude vote of the sword? Our laws, the common fence and security of the nation, and every man's best and richest patrimony, were themselves outlawed by the private interests of a few ambitious malecontents: our Church rent in pieces by schisms, errors, heresies, damnable doctrines of devils; not only publicly broached, but publicly patronized too.

And, yet, some easy minds are ready to think those times happy, because of the liberty, or rather indeed the licentiousness, of religion. But, was religion indeed in so good a plight, when, in a junto, the necessity and usefulness of the ministry was put to the question? when learning, religion, and the holy and precious ordinances of God depended upon the rotten breath of a company of men of rotten and corrupt minds, whose gain was their godliness, and who had nothing holy belonging to them but what they got by sacrilege? Was religion in so good a plight, when we daily feared an interdict upon our public assemblies? when the solemn worship of God was interrupted and affronted, by every one, that had but impudence and enthusiasm enough to do it? Nay, indeed religion was vanished into canting phrases, into an empty and notional profession; and that very profession, dwindled away into innumerable sects and schisms, errors and heresies: that, certainly, none can think it was in a prosperous condition, but those, who think religion then prospers, when it is not much, but manifold. Those, who tolerated every sect, every opinion and religion, seemed so to carry themselves, as if within a while they would have expelled the true: for, certainly, when once men in power

can allow of false doctrines, the next step is to embrace them; the next, to impose them.

Yea, the fickleness and instability of our usurped governments, which might give us hope of relief, proved only the frequent renewing of our misery: one power still succeeding another, in the same design; all seeking to advance themselves, upon the ruins of the public*. I remember an Apologue of an ulcerated man: when his friends would have driven away a swarm of flies that had been long sucking his sores, "Let them alone," saith he: "these are pretty well sated; but if you drive them away, fresh ones will come, with fresh appetites, and more torment me." So, truly, it fared with us, in our tosses and change of governments: when one swarm of our governors had their greediness and avarice somewhat glutted, then were we consigned over unto another; who ate the very flesh of these nations, and drank their tears and blood. Yea, and what was both the reproach and aggravation of our misery, those flies were but the offspring of dirt and dunghills: our plague was like that of Egypt, the very dust of the earth crawled upon us: the meanest of the people were our rulers: and, out of those brambles, proceeded fire, that consumed the cedars of Lebanon. And, according to the pedigree of our princes, such were our priests and teachers: if any could but prate nonsense, and prove it by blasphemy, this was a sufficient consecration into the office: this was enough to make him a most admired light, who indeed was but an *ignis fatuus*; leading the silly and deluded rout, through the bogs and precipices of error and heresy, into perdition.

This was the posture both of Church and State, in those blessed times of Religion and Liberty, which they so much boast of! and which were so highly advanced by those men's zealous endeavours, that they were grown quite out of reach, and almost out of sight: and, had not God, by a miracle of divine mercy, interposed, within a while we should neither have had the face nor the name of Religion or Liberty left amongst us. But he infatuated their counsels, and defeated their designs; and, when there was no visible power to break them, he dashed them in pieces one against the other, till they mutually brake themselves. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord. But*

* *Haud parcat populis regnum breve.* Stat.

let the King rejoice in God, and joy in thy strength; through the mercy of the Most High, let him never be moved.

Now, although it hath pleased Almighty God to break that yoke from off our necks, and to set us free from that oppression and violence: yet we ought not only to detest, but to bemoan the outrages and wickednesses, which were then committed; and seek to God, that he would avert from us those plagues and judgments, which the guilt of a part may deservedly bring upon these whole nations. For this is the unhappiness of being linked, though not in conspiracy, yet in national society, with evil-doers; that, although we first suffer from their sins, yet we may afterwards suffer for them: when but one Achan had sinned; and that not so heinously, as to make him either a murderer or a regicide; God punisheth the whole camp of Israel for it, and causeth them to flee and fall before their enemies: Josh. vii. 11. *Israel hath sinned....for they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled:* it was but the fact of one private man, and yet God chargeth it upon the whole: *Israel hath sinned, and they have taken.* Such a malignant influence hath the very community with wicked men, though we have no communion with their wickedness, to diffuse guilt and judgments upon a whole nation. Believe it, blood is a loud and crying sin: the first, that was ever spilt, was heard as far as from earth to heaven: Gen. iv. 10. *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground:* and Rev. vi. 10. the souls under the altar cry with a loud voice, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* And if the blood of private persons be so audible in God's ears, how much more loud and vocal is the blood of a slaughtered monarch! especially when the blood, oppression, and ruin of so many thousands as were involved in the direful consequences of that fatal day, join their voices with it, assault heaven, and cry aloud for vengeance. Let us then cry mightily to God, that the voice of our prayers may be louder in his ears, than the voice of our provocations: and let us by our tears wash away that foul stain which lies upon our profession; and beg of God, that he would pour out a plentiful effusion of the blood of Christ, to cleanse these nations from the guilt of blood: for nothing less than the blood of God, which could expiate even for the shedding of itself, can expiate for the shedding of the blood of a King.

A
DISCOURSE

AGAINST

REBELLION.

FROM PROV. xvii. 26.

ALSO TO PUNISH THE JUST IS NOT GOOD, NOR TO STRIKE PRINCES
FOR EQUITY.

TREASON and rebellion are such horrid and loathsome crimes, that if they should appear in their native visage and genuine deformity, they could never form a party, nor allure men to divorce their allegiance, and espouse a cause whose very look is hideous, and whose portion is shame and damnation: and therefore they always wish themselves under some goodly vizer; and insinuate into the affections of the unwary and easily deceived multitude, under the specious pretences of piety and purity, zeal for the reformation of religion, the extirpation of superstition and idolatry, the security of our liberties and properties, the preservation of the kingdoms from tyranny and arbitrary government: and, to view, they expose no other consequents, but glorious days, godliness in its power, Christ upon his throne, and heaven upon earth; and such golden dreams, that too many of the people, in the simplicity of their hearts, have followed Absalom, and, transported with the witchcraft of rebellion, have abominated those who are truly loyal and orthodox, as enemies to the sceptre and kingdom of Christ, secret favourers of Popery, and open abettors of profaneness. When this zeal (and I may well call it a zeal without knowledge) hath once turned their brains, straight they receive a commission from heaven, *to bind their own kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron*: straight it is trumpeted into their ears, that cursed is he, who goeth not forth *to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty*; that cursed is he, *that withholdeth his*

sword from blood, and who doeth this work of the Lord negligently.

We have already seen the direful effects of this popular frenzy; and, if we are not wilfully blind, we may well see that the same artifices are still made use of to the same ends. Wherein, as our stupidity is gross and inexcusable, to be twice gulled by the same methods, twice caught by the same bait; so is the craft and subtlety of our factious deceivers most conspicuous, in throwing out the most taking law that can be devised to make the rash vulgar eagerly stoop to it: for, if once they can be but flattered into an opinion, that they are the only saints, (and indeed man is a very silly creature, and loves to be flattered into glorious delusions) it is then very easy to make them believe, that it is their undoubted privilege and their birthright by grace, to *thrash mountains*: and to overturn all earthly power, which may give a check to that spiritual kingdom, which they have modelled in their own fancies; for *such honour have all his saints.*

Perhaps some here may think me too sharp, in making such a representation: but, indeed, it is impossible to speak of the humours of a mad and giddy age, without seeming severe to the infected; and he, who barely shews what they have been, and what in too great a measure they still are, is most satirical and biting. It is not my design to offend any: but if I am accounted their enemies for telling them the truth, it was the Apostle's lot before mine; and what was his support, I hope will be mine, the discharge of my duty and a good conscience.

If therefore any shall think that a good and holy cause (as every party is apt to think its own to be), if they shall think that equity and piety, religion and reformation, that the most precious cause and the most holy designs, can justify rebellions or sanctify the authors of them, I desire them, in the name of the Great God, soberly to consider that short portion of Scripture which I have chosen for my text, and on which my following Discourse shall be grounded. They are the words of the wisest of men:

Prov. xvii. 26. *Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.*

It is true, indeed, that these words were spoken by one who was a prince; yea, one of the greatest princes upon earth: yet he spoke them by the dictate of the King of Heaven. And, there-

fore, it is a most impious and profane spirit, that hath prompted some to say, that Solomon, in his writings, hath pleaded his own interest; and hath strained the right of kings so high, because himself was one. If this be not an unpardonable sin, in those, who pretend to be more refined Christians than others: yet I am sure it is one sort of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, by whose immediate direction Solomon wrote, and wrote for our direction; which if they will not follow, I think the king's loss of his subjects' obedience is nothing near so considerable, as the subjects' loss of their own souls.

I very well know, that some have perversely translated this text; and, instead of *striking princes for equity*, have rendered it *princes striking for equity*. It is true, indeed, that it is not good for princes to strike their subjects for equity, since this were tyranny and persecution: but, though this be a truth, yet every truth is not a true interpretation; nor can it possibly be the sense of this place. First, because it is against the natural order of the words, *לֹא טוֹב לַהֲכֹת נְדִיבִים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל*: which, according to the plain grammatical construction, ought to be rendered as our Translation, the Septuagint, and the Arabic have it: *It is not good, to strike princes for equity*; or else we must make an unnatural and ungrammatical transposition of the words, where there is no occasion for it. And, secondly, because they, who do otherwise render the words, must accuse Solomon of committing a tautology in one of his short and concise Proverbs; and all men know that it is against the genius of proverbial speeches, to have any insignificant redundancies: yet if we must translate these words, as some would have us, that *it is not good, for princes to strike for equity*, is not this the very same sense with what he had said before, that *it is not good, to punish the just*? for those princes, who do *strike for equity*, do certainly *punish the just*.

The words, therefore, seem to have a double aspect.

The one respects Princes; forbidding them to punish their righteous subjects: *To punish the just, is not good.*

The other respects the People; forbidding them to rebel against their princes for equity's sake: *It is not good.....to strike princes for equity.*

It is not good, to punish the just. It is neither good in conscience, nor good in consequence: it is not good in conscience, because it is the highest piece of injustice, that can be committed, to wrong those who wrong not any law either of God

or man, and to exact a penalty from those who are guilty of no transgression; this is absolute tyranny and oppression: it is not good in consequence, because God will be the avenger of all such; and *he, that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons*, as the Apostle speaks, Col. iii. 25. Persecution for the sake of Christ, as it is *an evident token....of salvation*, to those, who meekly suffer it; so it is *an evident token of perdition*, to those, who inflict it: as we have it, Phil. i. 28, 29. But, because every man's ways seem right in his own eyes, although they are never so crooked in the eyes of God, therefore their fondness for their own sentiments and their zeal for their own way will make them account all who oppose them as enemies to the truth and persecutors of righteousness; and if any the least restraint be laid upon their illegal and licentious practices, though it be done with the greatest moderation and upon the highest necessity of preventing the general ruin, this they look upon as a punishing of the just and godly: and I am afraid too many think their party most grievously persecuted, only because they have not yet the power, which, by all Jesuitical artifices, they are labouring to get of persecuting others. That, therefore, we may not be imposed on by the exclamations of those, who arrogate to themselves to be the only people of God, let us not so much consider whether they be just and righteous, (I heartily wish that all who have so good an opinion of themselves were really so) but whether they suffer for justice and righteousness' sake. If so, then happy and blessed are they: *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them*. But, if any man suffer for transgressing the laws of the magistrate, which he is not sure to be contrary to the laws of God; if any man suffer in the defeat of a conspiracy, or in carrying on turbulent and seditious designs against the peace of the established government; if any man suffer, as he is a busy promoter of any particular faction of Christians, rather than a zealous promoter of the general profession of Christians; let us not think that man suffers as a Christian, but for acting directly contrary to the express rules of Christianity. But, indeed, what sufferings, what punishments were they, which could exasperate their minds to enter into that hellish and accursed design, for the discovery and disappointment of which we this day bless our great and gracious God? did they suffer from the state; unless it were grievous in their eyes that it was peaceful, prosperous, and

flourishing? did they suffer any thing in their own estates; unless it were a dangerous surfeit of ease, wealth, and plenty? did they suffer in their conscience; except it were a tormenting regret, that they could not model the government of the Church according to their own fancies? were they not permitted their own liberty, both as to their way of discipline and worship? did the open doors of their meetings, and the vast numbers within those doors, make them look like a persecuted people? were they a persecuted people, when it is sufficiently known that many joined themselves to them merely for their interest and their own advantage; and, in many places, those, who cleaved to the communion of the Established Church, suffered the persecution of revilings and bitter mockings? What sufferings then can we imagine they lay under, unless it be an insupportable suffering to tender and generous spirits to enjoy all this licence merely upon sufferance? The laws and statutes were against them, it is true: but if this be such a dreadful persecution, surely they are men of a very delicate sense, who can feel the letter of a law, when they never felt the execution of the penalty. In fine, let any rational man soberly consider the illegality and destructive tendency of their ways, and then withal the great condescensions of the government to them; and let him impartially pronounce, whether they were any otherwise persecuted than that they could not persecute, or any otherwise oppressed than that they were not uppermost. For this it is that they struggle. And, when they had long since gotten an uncontrollable power into their hands, we then sadly found, that the injustice and tyranny of those, who pretended they were set up by God on purpose to punish the faults of others, only justified and acquitted them; so that the greatest crimes and miscarriages, which envy could ever object against those, whom they called the ungodly and malignant party, were innocence and virtue, in comparison with the enormous villainies of those saints, who were sent to correct them.

But, however, suppose all their exclamations to be true and well grounded: suppose them, first, to be as just as they suppose themselves: suppose, secondly, that, for this their justice and righteousness, they are most cruelly and inhumanly punished; the first of which I wish were as true, as the second is certainly false: suppose, thirdly, that the magistrate is extremely to blame, and guilty of a great sin before God and man, to punish such innocent and righteous persons: Yet, after

all this, the question is, Whether it be lawful for such persecuted subjects to revenge themselves upon their persecuting rulers: whether they may not, for the sake of piety and religion, for the preservation of the true profession and professors thereof, for the maintenance and administration of justice and equity, repel force with force, and strike at those princes, who so injuriously strike at them: to this my text answers, No, they may not: for, though it be not good for princes *to punish the just*, neither is it good *to strike princes*, no not *for equity*.

And this is that part of my text, on which I intend chiefly to insist.

And here it is necessary briefly to open the words; wherein we have,

The Action condemned: which is, *to strike princes*.

The Cause, Motive, or Provocation to this action: *for equity*.

The Censure and Doom passed upon it by the wisest of men, guided by the Spirit of the all-wise God: It is *not good*.

I. I shall begin with this last, the DOOM and CENSURE: which, though it be mild in terms, is yet very heavy and tremendous in sense: It is *not good*.

It speaks only dislike, but means detestation: and, by a meiosis frequent in Scripture, carries the signification much farther than the expression; and declares that it is a crime most impious in itself, and most odious and abominable to God. So Prov. xvi. 29. *A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into a way that is not good*: i. e. a way, that is most baneful and pernicious. And, most fully, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. *Ye shall remember.....your doings that were not good*; which he there interprets to be their iniquities and their abominations.

II. Let us consider the ACTION, which is thus condemned to be not good; i. e. to be extremely heinous and impious; which is, *to strike princes*.

Neither must this be understood precisely according to the literal and proper signification of it; as if nothing else were forbidden but a rude and boisterous wounding of them: but, hereby, the Holy Ghost prohibits also whatsoever may be an injury, either to their persons or to their authority; for both are sacred.

i. WE MUST NOT STRIKE PRINCES WITH THE TONGUE, IN THEIR FAME AND REPUTATION; any more than with the hand, in their persons: nor, by reviling or diminishing whispers, fly-blow the ears of their subjects: nor, by little arts, and suspicious intimations, and sly conveyances of shrugs, *aposiopeses*, and half sentences, seek to undermine and lessen them in the affections of their people.

We have already both seen and felt the fatal consequents of such methods of insinuating politic jealousies into the minds of men: first, by supposition, what if such things should be, till the seditious humour growing stronger, they come to bold affirmations that they are; and, then, with an affected sadness, bidding us prepare for sadder times, for greater sufferings and calamities which are yet to ensue. And, so, the vulgar are possessed with nothing but fears and dismal apprehensions, of what miseries are coming upon them, and what they are like to undergo from the power and authority of their rulers: which all tends to produce that hate, which naturally follows upon fear; and so to shake the very roots and foundation of government, which are firmest settled in the love and cheerful obedience of the subjects. We have already felt, I say, the sad and bitter consequences of this artifice, of striking princes with the tongue: which hath been but the prologue to a sad tragedy; and made way to all the extremities of blood, rapine, and violence, under which these three unhappy kingdoms for many years miserably groaned. And I pray God we may not again find the fatal effects of it: for every discerning person may evidently see that we are treading in the very same tracks, which before led us to death and ruin. Certainly, those, who will draw their tongues against their prince to lessen his authority, would, if they had opportunity, draw their swords too to cut it quite off. Such whisperers, who make it their business to go about with sad news; and, with instructed sighs, instil into the people groundless reports and false surmises, giving out blind and ambiguous speeches, as if they would be thought to understand much more than they dare relate, that religion is in danger, and Antichristianism will doubtlessly be established, making the poor amused people believe that none are true Christians nor true Protestants but themselves: these are the very *boutefeus* of the nation, and their breath hath blown up the coals in one civil war already; and, if the same arts have the same success

upon the minds of the people, I see not how we can avoid another. Indeed, God hath at this time wonderfully blasted their wicked counsels; and delivered us from a ruin, which, by these cunning wiles, they had been long preparing for us: and, for so great a rescue, we bless his holy name. And, oh! that we might ever be so wise as to avoid the entanglement of these snares. Beware, O Christians! upon your fidelity to God, the *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*; beware that you do not, by misrepresentations or misinterpretations, traduce the actions of your lawful governors; nor lend your ears, or assent, to the calumniating suggestions of a company of men, whose words, *though they are smoother and softer than oil, yet be they drawn swords*. Beware what air you breathe, what converse you keep: suffer none of those leeches to fasten on you, whose very mouths will draw blood. The Apostle has given them their right character: 2 Pet. ii. 10. *Presumptuous are they, self-willed: they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities*.

ii. WE MUST NOT STRIKE PRINCES IN THEIR AUTHORITY, NOR THE EXERCISE OF IT OVER US.

Which is done Two ways:

Either by refusing to be subject to their laws,
Or by deposing them from their dominion.

1. *We must not refuse subjection and obedience to their Laws*; for this is a striking, yea a maiming a prince, in his authority.

This is so often pressed and inculcated on us in Scripture, that scarce have we more precepts for any one duty to God, than we have express commands for our general subjection and obedience to our magistrates and rulers: 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God.* Rom. xiii. 1. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers*: and, v. 2. *Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they, that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation*: and in many other places, too numerous to be now cited. And, here, we are not to choose our subjection; and elect what laws we please to obey, and reject others: for this is to make ourselves our sovereigns, and to acknowledge no validity in the ordinances of the magistrate till we enact them. Believe it, it

is not little inconveniences, or prejudices, or secular interests and advantages, which can supersede the obligation, by which I am bound to obedience. It is not enough to say, "I do not like such a thing; and, therefore, I will not do it:" no; God hath not left you at such liberty. There lies a necessity upon you, in point of conscience, and as matter of eternal salvation or damnation, if not for the fear of the wrath of men yet for fear of the wrath of God, to yield ready obedience to every law and ordinance of man, which doth not contradict the law and command of God. And those, who think it no great matter to fail in their duty towards their governors, if so be they carefully perform their duty to God, do grievously delude themselves: for our obedience to them is a great part of our duty to God; and he hath as strictly enjoined it, under as great penalties and severe threatenings, as any other duty whatsoever which immediately concerns himself. Yea, our obedience is so absolutely required, that it is not left to our liberty to choose the penal, before the preceptive part of the Law; to choose to suffer the punishment, rather than to fulfil the precept: unless it be in one case, which I am sure no faction among us can with any reason alledge; and that is, when the laws of the magistrate do contradict the express laws of God: then, indeed, subjects are bound to yield submission only to the penal part, and willingly to undergo the punishment threatened in it, but by no means to obey the precept; for, in such cases, it is a stated and unvariable rule, that we must obey God rather than man. This therefore is the subjection, which we owe to the Supreme Authority: and whosoever refuseth to be actively obedient, when nothing is required against the Law of God; or passively obedient, in case it should be so; he strikes his prince, wounds him in his authority, and takes away a subject from him by turning him into a rebel.

2. Much less must we strike them in their authority, so as to attempt to depose them from their Rule and Government.

The crown doth not precariously depend upon the people; to be worne, and then laid aside again, as they shall please: nor can the dominion, with which a sovereign prince is invested, be abrogated by the consent of the people; although it might, perhaps, be first given by their consent: because, as there was the voluntary concurrence of both to assume it, so there must be again the voluntary concurrence of the prince at least to lay

it down; or else he must needs suffer wrong and injury. Indeed, it is far less injustice to take away any private man's inheritance, than to deprive a sovereign magistrate of that authority, which God and man, law and succession, and all the titles we can have here on earth, have instated in him. And the iniquity is so much the greater, inasmuch as virtually all other rights are lost and destroyed when his is; all others being derived from his, and depending upon it.

This, therefore, is the Second particular: We must not strike princes, in their Authority; either by denying obedience unto it, or deposing them from it.

iii. If this be iniquity, then certainly it is sacrilege TO STRIKE THEM IN THEIR PERSONS, AND TO OFFER VIOLENCE TO THEIR LIBERTY OR LIFE.

They are sacred, as they bear the impress of God's similitude stamped upon them; which whoso violates, is sacrilegious. God hath clothed them with majesty and power; and, whatsoever they are as to virtue and religion, though some of them may be Devils for their morals, yet they are Gods for their dominion. And the Great God, who is their only King and Ruler, hath bestowed upon them the fellowship of that high name: Ps. lxxxii. 6. *I have said, Ye are gods:* and, v. 1. *He judgeth among the gods.* So, Exod. xxii. 28. *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people:* this prohibition respects not the Heathenish Gods, who were indeed but devils; and no reproach could be injurious to them: but *thou shalt not revile the gods, who are the rulers of thy people;* for it reflects a high disparagement and indignity upon the only true God, to abuse his image, and affront that authority which is the nearest type and resemblance of his own. And therefore when David, who was designed to the next succession in the kingdom, cut off but the skirt of Saul's garment, (who was his sworn and implacable enemy, and sought his destruction by all unworthy means) though he did it without intending any hurt to his person or contempt to his authority, but only that he might produce it as a pledge and evidence of his innocence; yet it is said, that *his heart smote him* for it, because he had approached too near to majesty with any other design than to serve and venerate it. What then shall we think of those, who durst cut off not only the skirt, but the Sacred Head of a sovereign prince, and

stretch forth their bloody hands against the Lord's Anointed? certainly, we never heard that their hearts smote them for it; or that they ever testified the least remorse for so horrid and impious a crime: yea, they died glorying that they had done it; and seemed not only to have peace, but to be full of raptures and ecstatic joys in the assurance of a glorious reward for it; which yet is so far from being a justification of their horrid wickedness, that we may rather think they had sinned and were hardened past repentance. And, as for our late conspirators, they were altogether as bloody, though not so ceremonial as the former: they had prepared their instruments of death, culled out a select number of assassins, chosen the place on which to take their stand to the greatest advantage both for success and secrecy; and now nothing wanted, but that *the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord*, had fallen in their snares, but only a few days and a favourable providence: but God, whose care sovereign princes are, and among them ours in a more especial and peculiar manner, by a wonderful providence (which his majesty himself hath thankfully acknowledged in his Declaration) defeated their designs, and after brought to light their hellish villainy: and, though they were unsuccessful, yet were they not less guilty, than if their execrable attempt had taken the same effect that hell and their own wicked hearts had desired; for whosoever designs to strike his prince, whether he hit or miss, murders his own soul.

And thus I have shewn you how princes are stricken; in their reputation, by slanderous tongues; in their authority, by denying subjection to it or endeavouring to depose them from it; and, lastly, in their persons, by violence and murder: and how damnable and destructive each of these ways of striking princes is: It is not good to strike princes.

III. The third and last branch of my text yet remains: and that is, the CAUSE, MOTIVE, or PROVOCATION to this abominable and damnable action; and that is, Equity: *It is not good....to strike princes for Equity.*

These words may admit of a double interpretation: for we may understand them, either of the princes', or the subjects' equity: and to strike for either, is here censured as a heinous crime.

i. *To strike princes for Equity*, may be understood of RESISTING AND REBELLING AGAINST THEM FOR THEIR OWN EQUITY; and the execution of that justice, which is committed to them.

When a prince shall duly execute the righteous and known laws of his land, and suffer for so doing by his powerful and factious subjects; when he shall punish any of them for doing evil, and thereby exasperate them to take revenge; when he shall zealously maintain God's worship and service in the stated and regular way, and thereby incense the ignorant and wayward multitude to rise against government itself as superstition, and to pull down kings as idols: this is to be stricken for equity; for the doing of that, which is just and right. And it is a most provoking crime in the sight of God; for it is no less than rebellion against him: for, as resisting and wronging an inferior officer commissioned by the king, is virtually and interpretatively the same disobedience, as if it were done against the king in person; so, likewise, to resist and injure kings and supreme magistrates in the execution of their righteous laws, is virtually the same affront, as if we rose up against God, and struck immediately at him; for they receive their commission from him, and are his viceroys and vicegerents on earth.

Now, though this sense of the words carries in it a great truth, yet I do not think it the most proper import of them in this place; and that, because this is the very same with punishing the just, from which striking of princes for equity seems to be made distinct.

ii. Therefore, the striking of princes for equity, may be understood of STRIKING THEM FOR THEIR SUBJECTS' EQUITY: that is, it is a great iniquity to strike princes, upon any pretences of equity and justice in so doing.

Never yet was there any insurrection against the lawful magistrate, but what was prefaced with glorious pretences; the honour of God, the liberty of the subject, a due freedom for tender consciences, the thorough reformation of abuses in Church and State, the establishing of the ordinances of Jesus Christ in power and purity: which, indeed, are all of them as excellent things, as any design of man can reach; and we can never too much prosecute them, while we do it in a lawful and allowed manner.

But, what! must we therefore level kings and kingdoms to the ground; and cast down, by right or wrong, whatsoever we

fancy stands in our way to these blessed ends? No; God forbid! for, though our end may be equity, and truth, and justice, and holiness; yet it is iniquity *to strike princes for equity*. A good purpose can never justify a wicked action; and God abhors that our sins should be made the means of his glory.

Yet, certainly, there is no one topic, which doth more prevail upon weak minds, than this. Persuade them once to believe, that they are like to be wronged in the dearest of all their concerns, their religion or their property; that Popery will overthrow the one, and Arbitrary Government the other: and there needs no other ferment to make them work over into sedition and tumults; to shake, and, if they can, overthrow the established government, which indeed is the surest defence against both.

Arbitrary Government is, in truth, a hard word; and a much harder thing: and I am verily persuaded, that many men have learned to speak it by rote, who understand nothing at all what it signifies: and it may mean Classical or Synodal, for ought they know; and I am sure with much better correspondence than as they usually apply it. In short; arbitrary government is a government managed by the sole will and pleasure of the ruler, without the direction and prescript of laws. But have they any reason to fear this? was there ever any prince, who, in all his public transactions, hath kept himself more precisely to the rules of the established and known laws, than ours hath done? hath he ever sought, by force and violence, to push on his designs; or to redress those intolerable affronts and injuries, which have been done him by some of his petulant subjects, by any other means than recourse to the laws? yea, and in those just and mild proceedings, he hath met with such hard and perverse measures, that he had reason to complain, as it is said he once did, that none within his dominions were denied justice, but himself. So that this pretence of Arbitrary Power and Arbitrary Government, is nothing but a bugbear; invented to fright the people first from their wits, and then from their allegiance. And, let me add, that, of all men in the world, those, who, by such wicked arts and bloody enterprizes, sought the subversion of the government, ought least of all to have objected this: for, as their vile attempts were utterly against law; so, had they succeeded in them, no doubt their sway, and management of their usurped power, would have been most

arbitrary, and squared by no other law than their own will and pleasure.

And, for the coming in of Popery, I must confess, I dread it as much as they; and, I think, upon better grounds. For I not only know the restless industry, the crafty artifices, the formidable power and interest of that Antichristian Party, who have with the greatest application endeavoured, in one continued series, to reduce that rotten religion again into these nations, ever since it was first expelled out of them: but that, which gives me the most troublesome apprehension, is, the helping-hand, which those lend to bring it back again, who yet seem to cry out loudest, That it is coming in. Are these men fit to keep out Popery, who do what they can, by their factions, schisms, seditions, and conspiracies, to make Protestantism odious; and act so, as if it were their design to demonstrate to the world, that we must be either Papists or Rebels? nay, as if it were their design to baffle all popish plots and detestable treasons, by striving to outdo them? What shall I say? it is a lamentation, and it shall be for a lamentation, that these men, who pretend to be at the greatest distance from Popery, and who are ready to call all others Papists but themselves; yet do their work for them more effectually, than all the emissaries of Rome or of hell could have done. And yet, I hope that our God hath not utterly abandoned the small remains of his true Reformed Church among us; and that, notwithstanding all the advantages which these men have given to the common adversaries, not only to reproach but to persuade and prevail, he will yet, in his infinite mercy, find out expedients to preserve his true religion free, both from Romish idolatry and fanatical confusion. In the which hope, I am the more encouraged by the wonderful preservation of his Majesty from the two hellish conspiracies, both of Popish and Antimonarchical Plotters; as also, by his pious care of settling the succession of his crown upon princes of Protestant Families and Profession: which whosoever shall seriously consider, can never be induced to believe otherwise, than that the sincere intention and earnest desire of his Majesty and of the government, is to maintain the true Orthodox Protestant Religion, as it is at present established.

But, if God should, for our great sins; and, among them, our carnal distrust and jealousy, fears of dangers, and wicked arts to prevent them; set open the mouth of the bottomless pit,

so that the locusts and smoke thereof should again overspread these lands: what have we else to do, but patiently to give up our lives as a testimony for Jesus Christ, who gave his life a ransom for us? In this case, it is better to die martyrs, than malefactors; and far more like Christians, to breathe our last at a stake, than on a block. If princes will be so ill advised as to punish the just, yet must not we strike them again for equity. Believe it, Sirs, whatsoever doctrine is contrary to this, is anti-christian; contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and to the constant practice of the holy martyrs in the first and purest ages of the Church.

But, as I said before, so now I say again, that the greatest danger which I yet see of the irruption of Popery, is from the scandal given by the seditious and rebellious of those, who call themselves Protestants, upon a pretence of keeping it out. But, certainly, whatsoever in truth they be, Protestants they are not: for both their doctrine and practices are directly contrary to this great fundamental article of the Protestant Doctrine, That kings are supreme to all under God, and accountable to none but him; that, in all things, subjects ought to submit themselves to their rule and government: in all lawful things, by a cheerful obedience; and, in all other, by a contented suffering. But they, who would set up the Sovereign People, or the Sovereign Church and Synod, above the King; and invest them with power, to call him to an account for his actions, to censure, to control and punish him; are not Protestants: but, take it how they please, are, in this point, as rank Papists as the Pope himself, or any in his conclave. And, if either sort of Papists prevail, either they who are for one pope or they that are for a great many, on both parts the royal sovereignty is lost, and the imperial crown must vail either to the mitre or the black cap.

If the bloody designs of either party had succeeded, what horrid confusions had we seen before this day! We had either been weltering in our own blood, or wading through the blood of others. But, blessed be God, who hath delivered us; and will, we hope and pray, still deliver us. *Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth: Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Blessed be the Lord, who giveth salvation unto kings, who hath delivered David his servant from the hurtful sword.* The mercy, which we this day commemorate, deserves the praises due for the mercies which we hope to receive during

our whole lives ; for they all depend upon this day. And, therefore, let us not celebrate it with a carnal, rude, and profane joy : but, as you would approve yourselves loyal subjects, beware that you do nothing this day that may cause God to repent he hath bestowed so great a mercy upon you. You cannot shew yourselves greater enemies to the king, than by riot and excess, ranting and quaffing ; which are the too frequent practices of those, who, when they should render thanks unto God for his mercies, do what they may to provoke his judgments. But let it be our employment, soberly and spiritually to admire and to bless God, for all those gracious expressions of his care and watchful Providence over our Church and Kingdoms ; and not to drink, but to pray, health and happiness to our king.

A
DISCOURSE
ON
BROTHERLY ADMONITION.

FROM LEV. xix. 17.

THOU SHALT NOT HATE THY BROTHER IN THY HEART: THOU SHALT IN ANY WISE REBUKE THY NEIGHBOUR, AND NOT SUFFER SIN UPON HIM.

WAVING all Prefaces and Introductions, we may observe in these words Three parts.

First. A Negative Command: *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart*: which implies in it the contrary positive precept, *Thou shalt love thy brother*.

Secondly. A Direction how we should preserve ourselves from this rancoured vice of hatred; and express our more cordial love, in the best service we can do for him: *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour*.

Thirdly. A forcible Motive, to excite us unto the performance of this duty, drawn from the consideration of the great benefit, which will, in likelihood, redound to him by the conscientious discharge of it. By this means thou wilt *not suffer sin* to lie upon him: implying, that, if this charitable Duty of Fraternal Reproof be neglected, he will still continue in his sins, his guilt will remain upon him, and thou wilt be accessory to it.

I shall not consider any of these particulars by themselves, but treat only of what is here chiefly intended, namely, the necessity of that much neglected duty of Brotherly Reproof and Admonition.

And here I shall prosecute this method, with all possible brevity and perspicuity: and shall shew you

What Brotherly Correction is.

The Difficulty of it.

The Necessity of it.

Some Rules and Directions, how it ought to be performed.

Some Considerations, which may be powerful Motives and Engagements to it.

I. WHAT BROTHERLY REPROOF OR CORREPTION IS.

To this I answer, in brief: It is an act of love and charity, whereby we endeavour to reduce our offending brother to repentance and reformation.

And

i. There are Two ways of doing it: either by WORDS or ACTIONS.

1. By *words*.

Remonstrating to them the greatness of their sin; the scandal which they give to others, either by encouraging or saddening them; the reproach which they bring upon religion; and the danger which they bring upon their own souls. But, if they be deaf to all these admonitions, and continue obstinate and resolved in their evil courses, we are then to reprove them,

2. By *actions*.

That where words have proved ineffectual, we may try how deeds can prevail. Prevail, I say, either to deliver them; or, at least, to deliver thine own soul from death.

And this also must be done these Two ways.

(1) If they be our Inferiors, over whom we have authority; either as magistrates, or parents, or the like; we ought, when admonition and correption is fruitless, to reprove them by Correction and Punishment. If they will not hear, they must feel rebuke.

This discipline, if it be seasonably and prudently used, is so far from being any act of cruelty, that it is an act of the greatest kindness and charity that can be, both to them and to others. To them: as it may restrain them from the commission of those future crimes, to which their impunity would else embolden them; and, thus, to fall into the hands of men, may be a means to keep them from falling into the hands of God. To others: as it may terrify them from following the examples of such an one's vices, by seeing the examples of his suffering:

thus the punishment of some is made to become the innocence of others.

(2) If they be our Equals, over whom we have no jurisdiction nor coercive power, we are then to rebuke them, if they continue obstinate after Christian Admonition, by withdrawing ourselves from all necessary converse with them: not so as to deny them the offices of civility, courtesy, and our charitable assistance to promote their temporal good; but to break off all familiarity and intimacy with them; not to make such lewd and dissolute persons our friends and chosen companions.

Thus the Apostle charges us, 2 Thess. iii. 6: *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* And this way of reproofing them ought to be so managed by us, that it may appear that it doth not proceed from any sour, morose, surly humour; disdaining or hating of their persons: but merely from conscience of our duty towards the glory of God; and to do an act of love and charity, as indeed it is, both towards them, and towards ourselves.

[1] Towards them.

When you thus endeavour to shame them out of their wickedness, by discountenancing them in it. So says the Apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14. *If any man obey not our word....note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* And, indeed, if a man be not altogether profligate, if he be not utterly lost to modesty, it must needs make him reflect upon himself with shame and blushing, that certainly he is grown a strange vile wretch, a loathsome and odious monster, when all good and sober men do thus carefully shun and avoid him. Now shame is a good step to amendment; and a blush the first colour, that virtue takes.

[2] Towards yourselves.

You are obliged to abandon them, as to reclaim them, so to secure yourselves: for vice is very contagious; and it is unsafe to converse with those, who have such plague-sores running upon them, lest you be also infected.

Thus you see what this duty of Brotherly Reproof is; and how, in the general, it is to be performed, either in words or actions.

ii. And, to these, TWO THINGS ARE NECESSARILY PREVIOUS AND ANTECEDENT :

1. *Instruction and Conviction.*

We ought to bring them to see their fault, before we rebuke them for it ; otherwise, while we chide and do not inform them, it will rather seem a proud design of quarrelling with them, than a conscientious design of bettering them. And therefore we find how artificially Nathan insinuates into David the heinousness and inhumanity of his sin, and works in him a hatred and detestation of that person who was so cruel and devoid of compassion, before he comes to deal downright with him, *Thou art the man.* And could we but skilfully convince our brother, by thus representing the odiousness of such and such sins, to which we know he is addicted, possibly we might spare ourselves in that, which is the most ungrateful and displeasing part of this work, I mean personal reflection ; and leave it to his own conscience to reprove himself, and to apply it home, with, *Thou art the man.*

And,

2. It is necessary that we watch over our brother, *not so as to be insidious spies upon him* ; officiously to pry into his actions, and busily to concern ourselves in all he doth.

This pragmatistical temper is justly hateful : and those, who thus arrogate to themselves to be public censors, and to inspect the lives and manners of others, making it their whole employment to observe what others say or do, that they may have matter either to reprove or reproach them, are a company of intolerable busy-bodies.

But, yet,

(1) We ought so to watch over our brother as to give him timely caution, if we see him in any danger through temptation or passion ; and to admonish him to stand upon his guard, to recollect himself and beware he be not surprized or injured by such an approaching sin.

And

(2) If we have observed any miscarriages in him, we are to watch the best seasons and all the fittest circumstances, in which to remind him of it ; that so our reproof may be well accepted, and become effectual.

For he, who will venture rashly to reprove without this circumspection, may do more mischief to his brother by rebuking

him, than he had done to himself by offending: exasperating and embittering his heart against piety, for the impertinencies, at least the indiscretions, of those who profess it; and provoking him to sin the more, out of mere opposition and contradiction. And I am verily persuaded, and have in some cases observed it, that very many sins owe themselves to the imprudence of those, who have taken upon themselves to be reprovers; and would never have been committed, if they had not indiscreetly gain-sayed it.

Thus we see what this duty of reproving is, and what is necessarily required thereunto.

II. But, indeed, which is the Second thing, it is not so hard a matter to know what it is, as it is **DIFFICULT** conscientiously and faithfully to practise it.

How few are there in the world, I will not say skilful enough to do it well, but zealous and conscientious enough to do it at all! Do we not every day see God fearfully dishonoured, observe his name blasphemed, his laws violated, his worship denied? do you not daily see multitudes of wretched creatures, whose crimes not only defy and outrage God, but stab and murder their own souls? and, yet, who is there, that hath such zeal for God or such charity for his brother, as to interpose; and, by a serious and fitting reproof, vindicate the one from dishonour, or rescue the other from perdition? There are enow, who will make up a sad mouth, and whisper those things abroad, it may be out of very ill ends and designs; but where almost is the person, that will dare to maintain the honour of God to the face of those, who boldly affront him? that will dare to open their mouths before those, who will dare to open them against heaven? Certainly, we can easily produce much more reason for our reproofs, than they can for their wickedness; and it were very strange, if we should not be able to beat them off from their confidence, when we have God and our own consciences, nay and theirs also, to side with us. Yet, so it is, that we are generally apt to sneak and slink away from so troublesome a task; and to let iniquity pass uncontrouled, yea triumphant. We are well content to let others sin quietly, so that we may live quietly without troubling ourselves with so hard and difficult a service.

And that, which makes it seem so difficult, is,

A Sinful Fear; and,

A Sinful Shame, that seizeth on the spirits of men, and takes off the edge of holy courage and confidence, which are so absolutely necessary to the performing of this duty.

i. Many are AFRAID to reprove sin, lest they should incur displeasure, weaken their secular interest, ruin their dependencies, and bring some mischief upon themselves, by exasperating the offenders against them.

But these are poor, low, carnal considerations. Where matter of duty is in question, it is very necessary for every Christian to be of an undaunted courage and resolution; not to fear the faces of men, nor to be frightened with a grim look or a proud huff. If he will seriously perform this duty, he must remember, that he is pleading for God, that he is saving a soul from hell: and therefore ought not to value their anger, nor his own damage; but to steel himself against all such mean and sordid considerations. Indeed it shews a most pitiful spirit in us, that we should be more afraid of offending them, than they are of offending God: shall they be bold to sin, and we not bold enough to tell them of it? And yet, such is the cowardice of the generality of Christians, that they dare not appear for God, or for piety and holiness, when they see them wronged by the impudence of boisterous sinners: but those pitiful, little, base carnal respects, of what they may lose or what they may suffer by it, intervene; and make them sit mopish and over-awed, like men *in whose mouths are no reproofs*: Psal. xxxviii. 14. whilst these wicked wretches, who have all the reason in the world to be timorous and fearful, glory in thus outbraving and baffling them.

ii. Others, again, are ASHAMED to reprove sin.

And, whereas many vile and profligate wretches glory in their shame, these, on the contrary, are ashamed of that, which would be their glory. Either they doubt they shall be thought but troublesome and hypocritical intermeddlers: or else, possibly, being conscious to themselves of many miscarriages, they suspect their reproofs will be upbraidingly retorted upon themselves; and so, by reproving the faults of others, they shall but give an occasion to have their own ripped up and exposed: and so they think it the safer way to say nothing, lest, by raking into other

men's dunghills, they should but furnish them with dirt enough to fling back in their own faces. And thus, between these two carnal principles of Sinful Fear and Sinful Shame, which are so deeply rooted in our corrupt natures, Reproof is commonly neglected; and it is one of the hardest things in the world, to persuade men to be true to God, to their own souls, and to the souls of their brethren, in a faithful discharge of that duty, which is usually attended with such disadvantages and difficulties.

But, though it be thus difficult, yet,

III. It is a most NECESSARY duty.

The greatest good you can do in the world, is, to pluck up these briars and thorns with which it is overgrown. Consider but how insolent vice and wickedness is apt to be, where none do appear to check and control it: if it can but once silence virtue, it will quickly banish it: if it can but put it to the blush, it will quickly put it to flight. And when it hath once made us either afraid or ashamed to lay a rebuke in its way, what else can we expect, but that it should overspread the face of the whole earth; and, like a general deluge, drown all mankind, first in sin, and then in perdition? There is no other way to prevent this great and sad ruin, but for every Christian vigorously to oppose himself to the growing sins of the times and places in which he lives; and, with courage and resolution, to decry that common profaneness, which gains credit only by our silence. We know that sin is a shameful, opprobrious thing, in itself; a thing, that disheartens and dispirits the guilty: they wear a conscience about them, which is still checking and upbraiding them; and, if we could but look into their souls, we should see them covered all over with fear, horror, and confusion: they are generally self-condemned persons; and carry those monitors within their own breasts, which are continually reproving and tormenting them: and, therefore, that they may not hear the voice of their own consciences, they live abroad; and rather converse with any one without doors, than with themselves and their own troublesome and clamorous hearts. Now let it be our care to stop up all passages, by which they think to make their escape: let them find, that, in whatsoever company they go, they shall meet with those, who will no more spare them, than their own consciences; that company is no sanctuary for sins and guilt; and that they shall be as sure to be reproved, as

they dare to offend: and when they are thus every where beset; their consciences exclaiming against them within, and all whom they converse with without; they will see a necessity for it, either to forsake their vices or the world, and be forced to be virtuous for their own ease and quiet. And, certainly, till Christians do conspire together in this design, we may long enough complain of the abounding of iniquity, without any successful reformation: abound it will, and grow impudent and imperious, unless we join together to beat down its credit; to expose it to scorn and contempt; and to make that, which is so really shameful in itself, to be the greatest mark of infamy, shame, and reproach to any who shall dare to commit it.

But this duty of reproof, requires not only a great deal of Christian fortitude and courage; but also a great measure of Christian prudence and discretion. We must not only be resolute and confident in doing it; but we must do it, likewise, in such a fitting way, as may be most likely to work a good effect upon those, whom we are to reprove.

And, therefore,

IV. I shall give you some brief **RULES** and **DIRECTIONS**, when you ought to reprove, and how you ought to manage your reproofs, so as they may be most beneficial to your brother.

And some of them shall be **Negatives**, and others shall be **Positives**.

i. For the **NEGATIVE RULES**, take these that follow.

1. *I ought not to reprove my brother, if I have no certain knowledge of his offence.*

And therefore those, who, upon a blind rumour or groundless suspicion, hastily conclude him guilty, and so fill their mouths with reproofs, shew themselves to be very much in love with this office; and are a company of impertinent busy-bodies, who start their arrow before ever they see the mark. We must first be certainly informed, either upon our personal knowledge or upon the undoubted testimonies of credible witnesses, that he is guilty; otherwise, in going about to shew him his fault, we shall but shew our own folly and credulity: our reproofs will be but slanders; and our charity, in offering the cure, will not be half so great, as our uncharitableness, in believing the disease.

2. *It is not necessary for me to reprove, where I have reason to*

conclude that others, of more prudence and interest in the party, either have already or else will more effectually perform it.

For, otherwise, it will appear, that we do not so much seek his emendation, as to be ostentatious of our own zeal and forwardness: and, besides, too many reprovers may, instead of reforming, rather irritate and provoke. Only, here, beware thou dost not retract this ungrateful office, upon slight pretences; nor think thyself excused, because others are bound to do it: but consider seriously in thine own conscience, whether thou thinkest they will be faithful enough in performing it, or more dexterous than thou art in managing it; or that their reproof will be more acceptable and more prevalent with thy brother than thine. If not, thou art still obliged to it: and if thou refusest, know, that though he may die in his sins, yet his blood God will require at thy hands.

3. We ought not to give sharp reproofs for small offences.

We must not particularly, and with accent and emphasis, reprove our brother for every involuntary slip, every infirmity and weakness, that bewrayeth itself through some sudden passion or temptation: unless it be a sin of custom; or that, which carries with it some signal aggravation, that renders it considerable, as well in the scandal as in the guilt. It will be sufficient to pass by the rest, only with a brief animadversion upon them, enough to put him in mind that he forgot himself in such and such passages; and so leave the farther reproof to his own conscience, which will better do it for lesser sins, than possibly we can. To reprove small faults with great vehemence, is always as ridiculous, and may sometimes prove as destructive a piece of officiousness, as his, who took up a huge beetle, and struck with all his might, only to kill a fly which he saw sticking upon his friend's forehead. We must not thrust the probe deep, where the wound is but shallow: nor be passionately concerned at our brother's lighter failings: but so govern ourselves, as still to reserve the more sharp and severe reproofs for the more foul and scandalous offences: for they, who will presently, upon every slender occasion, fly out into exclamations, detestations, and all passionate exaggerations of rhetoric, will but lavishly spend the vigour of their zeal, and leave themselves no art, no methods to express their greater abhorrence for blacker crimes.

4. We are not to reprove those, whom we have reason to believe

are such desperate wretches, that our reproofs would but exasperate them to sin the more for a reproof.

To these, such would be no acts of love and charity; but rather a design to destroy their souls, and to heap more and heavy loads of wrath and vengeance upon their heads. Certainly, if we have any sense of God's glory, any tenderness and compassion for our brother's soul, we ought to beware that we do not enrage him the more, to dishonour the one, or to wound the other, by the mistaken charity of our reproofs. And therefore, St. Austin speaks well, (*De Civitate Dei*, lib. i. cap. 9.) *Si propterea corripicndis malè agentibus parcat, quia opportunum tempus requirit, vel iisdem ipsis metuit ne deteriores ex hoc efficiantur, videtur esse concilium Charitatis*: "It is Charity, not to reprove those, who we believe will be the worse for our reproofs." Alas! how many are there in the world, who, when they are reproved (and that very justly) for their sins, presently fall a blaspheming and cursing, railing at piety, and all who profess it, violate the good name of their reprovers, and can hardly abstain from offering violence to their persons! now such as these are past reproof, when once they turn reproof itself into an occasion of further sinning: the greatest exercise of charity to these, is, to let them alone; and not to increase their damnation, by stirring up the virulency and rancour of their spirits. Reproof is spiritual physic for the soul: now, as it is an imprudent course to administer such physic to the body, as will irritate, and not expel the peccant humours; so, likewise, it is very imprudent and unsafe, to administer such reproofs as we know cannot cure the offender, but will only irritate his corruption, and render it the more turbulent, and him much worse than he was before. And, therefore, some are themselves to be reproved, who, with an imprudent zeal, reprove others, without ever considering what effects their reproofs are likely to produce; who, as soon as a sin is committed, think themselves obliged in conscience, instantly to rebuke them for it, although not only they themselves may be reviled, but the name of God most horribly blasphemed upon this very occasion. *It is indeed good, to be zealously affected always in a good matter*: Gal. iv. 18. but yet withal know, that, as zeal and charity ought to be the motive, so Christian prudence ought to be the measure of all our reproofs: and, if you take not the advice of discretion, your zeal for God's glory may but occasion his dishonour; and

your charity to the souls of others, occasion their sorer ruin and damnation. Certainly, we are not obliged to reprove, where we have reason to suspect we shall rather do hurt than good: it would be but a cruel charity, to poison our brother in his physic, and to kill him in his cure. And, therefore, both Solomon, and a greater than Solomon, our Saviour Christ himself, have forbidden us to misplace reproofs upon those, who are desperate. Solomon tells us, Prov. ix. 7, 8. *He, that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame; and he, that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth unto himself a blot:* and, again, *Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.* And, says our Saviour, Mat. vii. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:* where it is very plain from the precedent verses, that he dehorts us from lavishing out our reproofs imprudently upon *dogs* and *swine*, wicked and impure persons, on whom we have reason to think they will have no effect, but only to enrage them, and make them fly out both against God and us with the more violence and madness. To reprove such, is but to cast up water against a high wind, that will be sure to beat it back again into our own faces.

And thus I have given you the Negative Rules, in these Four particulars. Reprove not without a certain knowledge of the offence: nor where others, who are likely to be more effectual, have done it already: nor for every involuntary slip: nor those, who are like to be the worse for it.

ii. Let us now proceed to lay down some POSITIVE RULES and DIRECTIONS, for the right managing of our reproofs.

And, here,

1. If thou wouldst reprove with success, *observe right circumstances of time and place.*

And let the one be as opportune, and the other as private, as thou canst. We ought to observe the *mollia tempora fandi*, “The soft and easy hours of speaking.” And therefore the Wise Man tells us, Prov. xv. 23. *A word spoken in due season, how good is it! It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver:* that is, very beautiful and pleasing. There are some happy seasons, wherein the most rugged natures are accessible; and it is a great part of prudence in all our concerns, if we would have them prosperous, to watch such opportunities, and to improve them.

Now, usually, it is no fit season for reproof,

(1) Presently, as soon as the sin is committed.

For then the heat is not over, nor the uproar of the passions and affections appeased. In all likelihood, a reproof as yet would but irritate. As water, falling upon a red hot iron, doth but cause a great deal of noise and disturbance; so a reproof, just upon the very act of a sin, doth but make the sinner fume, estuate, and tumultuate the more.

Nor, yet,

(2) Is a time of mirth and joy fit for reproof.

For that will look like a piece of envy: as if we were malicious at their prosperity; and therefore studied to cast in somewhat, that might disturb them: and so they will be apt to interpret it.

Nor,

(3) Is a time of exceeding great sadness and sorrow a proper season for reproof.

For this will look like hostility and hatred; as if we designed utterly to overwhelm and dispatch them.

But the fittest opportunity for this duty, is when they are most calm and sedate, their passions hushed, and their reason (with which you are to deal) again re-seated upon its throne. When they are free from all inward perturbations of mind, and from all considerable alterations in their outward estate and condition; then, if ever, they will listen to reproof, and take right measures of the sin for which you reprove them. But, if we reprove them when their passions are in a tumult, and all within in an uproar and combustion, it is no wonder at all if either they reject or revile our reproofs: for we then accuse them before very corrupt judges, viz. their own passions and corrupt affections; and you may, with as much reason and as good success, chide the sea for being tempestuous, when the winds rage and are let loose upon it. Chide a man for being angry when he is angry, and what will you get by it, but only some of his foam cast upon you? Let God himself expostulate with an impatient Jonah, whilst he is in his fit of impatience: *Doest thou well to be angry?* Jonah iv. 9. and he will tell him snappishly to his face, that he doth *well to be angry, even unto the very death*. There is no dealing with men while their passions blind their reason: this makes them as utterly incapable of taking good counsel, as if they were brute beasts. Thou wert as good thrust thy hand into a wasps' nest, as come with reproofs and rebukes when the swarm is up: to be sure thou shalt only go

away with many a sting and wound; and thou mayest thank thyself, for no better timing thy reproofs. Indeed, in cases of great importance and absolute necessity, we may run this venture, and possibly succeed well in it: thus Joab very sharply reproved David, when he so immoderately mourned for Absalom: 2 Sam. xix. 5, 6, 7. and I think it is one of the roundest checks, that ever a dutiful subject gave to his prince; but, if he had not taken that very time, the case had been desperate, and his people had all forsaken him, and therefore the necessity of affairs would not permit him to expect a more seasonable address. Otherwise, generally, it is more advisable to wait a fitting and cool time. As God is said to come down in the cool of the day to reprove Adam; so, likewise, should we come in the cool season of a man's passions, when all is quiet and temperate within, for then is there the greatest probability of success.

2. If thou wouldst have thy reproofs successful, *reprove with all gentleness and meekness*, without giving any railing or reviling terms.

He, who mingles reproach with reproof, engages a man's reputation to side with his vices: for whilst we shew any bitterness in our reproofs, and give them in villifying and ignominious language, the vehicle will hinder the operation of the physic: for they will look like the upbraidings of an enemy; and it is a thing most abhorrent unto nature, to follow the counsels and advice of an enemy. And therefore the Apostle chargeth us, Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou be also tempted*: which last clause intimates to us, that we ought to deal as tenderly with a fallen brother, as we would desire to be dealt with ourselves, were we in the same condition: for, having the same corrupt nature, and being subject to the like temptations, we may likewise, through God's dereliction of us, fall into the same miscarriages. Now wouldst thou take it well, if any should revile and reprove thee, condemn thee for a rotten hypocrite, as Job's friends did him; or draw hideous black consequences from every failing and weakness of thine? certainly, thou wouldst not interpret this to be friendly and candid dealing: no more do thou with others. It is a true saying, that he, who would know his own faults, had need have either a faithful friend, or a bitter enemy: they will both be sure to do it to the full: but then the dif-

ference is, that an enemy's reproofs are usually joined with reproaches, and when we are fallen he will stand and insult over us; but a true Christian friend will faithfully represent our condition to us, pity us in it, and endeavour to help and raise us out of it. And such should we be to all: not railing on them for hypocrites, or lost and desperate apostates; for this, certainly, is not the way to reduce them, but rather to confirm and harden them in their sins: we should not gripe nor press their wounds; but rather gently anoint and chafe them: our reproofs should be as oil, smooth and lenitive, to soke into and supple the part affected: and therefore the Apostle again exhorts us, *in meekness to instruct those, that oppose themselves*: 2 Tim. ii. 25. But, whilst we exclaim against them with bitter invectives, and dip all our reproofs in gall and satire, we may quickly make them loath the medicine, rather than the disease; and sooner break their heads with such rebukes, than their hearts for their offences.

3. Though our reproofs must be meek and gentle; *yet must they be quick and vivacious also.*

For, as charity requires the one, so doth zeal the other: and the best and most equal temper, is, rightly to mix these two; that, at once, we may shew meekness to his person, (*for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*: James i. 20.) and sharpness against his sin, (for a remiss reprover will make but a slow penitent.) We ought so to reprove, that he may not think we only jest and dally with him: and, for this, it is necessary that we do it with all seriousness, gravity, and authority; not playing about the wound, but searching into the very depth and bottom of it: and therefore we must use such words, as are most significant of our meaning, most expressive of our grief and sorrow for him; and which we think most apt to expose the vice that we reprove, and make it most odious and hateful, keeping still within the bounds of a sober and friendly redargution. Hence the Apostle gives Titus this advice, *Rebuke them sharply; that they may be sound in the faith*: Tit. i. 13: if they want salt and vinegar, spare them not: this, possibly, may cleanse those wounds, which else would fester and putrify. But here is required much spiritual prudence, to know how to suit reproof, according to the different conditions and tempers of the persons with whom you deal: some must be lanced and searched to the very quick, before they can be healed: others require a gentle hand: if they be proud and

stubborn, they need corrosives; but, for those who are naturally meek and mild, a meek and mild course will be easiest and most effectual. The tempers and cases of particular Christians are so various, that there can be no rules given which may be applicable to every condition: this must, of necessity, be left to your prudence and discretion. Only this rule is infallible: Be sure you flatter none in their vices. Extenuate not their sins: when thou comest to reprove them, do it not in sport: let them see thou art in very good earnest; and tell them their sin, as it is in itself, without mincing the matter or the circumstances of it: for men are always apt to impute somewhat of the reproof to the severity of him that gives it, rather than to the demerits of their own offences; and, therefore, if thou thyself shalt speak but slightly of their sins, they will be ready to conclude that they were none, or at least so small that it was nothing but officiousness and the love of censuring which made thee take notice of them.

4. Let all thy reproofs be given *as secretly and privately as possibly thou canst*; otherwise, thou wilt seem not so much to aim at thy brother's reformation, as at his shame and confusion.

For if (as the Wise Man tells us, Prov. xxvii. 14.) a loud and clamorous benediction given too officiously, is so far from being a blessing, that it is but a curse and a shame to a man's friend: certainly, then, a public clamorous reproof must only tend to the shame and reproach of those, who receive it. Indeed, there are some, who offend openly before many: these, if there be no fear of irritating them to do worse, we ought openly to rebuke; and to give them their reproof, in the company, where they have given the offence: so saith the Apostle, 1 Tim. v. 20. *Them, that sin, rebuke before all*; that is, supposing that their sins be open and public. But, for others, whose sins and miscarriages have been private, and only known to ourselves and a few others, we ought to reprove them in secret; and to be tender not only of their souls, but of their reputation also: so is the counsel of our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 15. *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*

And, indeed, this is a necessary piece of prudence; not only to preserve his reputation and good name as much as may be, but also,

(1) To preserve the reputation of religion itself, which a

more public divulging of his offences might much impair and discredit. And,

(2) To hinder the spreading of an evil example, which also perhaps some or other would make use of, to encourage themselves in the like transgressions. And,

(3) To preserve him serviceable for the future.

For, by reporting his miscarriages, thou lessenest his credit, and thereby renderest him less capable of doing good than he was before. For, though he may recover himself out of the snare of the Devil, and his wound be healed; yet, if his faults have been made public, the scar will still remain: and this will be such a blemish to him, that, having lost much of his repute among men, he will likewise lose much of those advantages which he formerly had of doing good in the world; and thou, by thy imprudent reproofs, be the cause of it. Upon all these accounts, it is necessary that thy reproofs be managed with the greatest secrecy and privacy that may be: for, as St. Austin speaks well, if whilst thou alone knowest thy brother to have offended, and yet wilt rebuke him before all, *Non es corrector, sed proditor*: “Thou art not a reprover, but a betrayer.”

5. *Reprove not one, who is greatly thy superior, unless it be at a respectful distance.*

Toward such, we must not use downright and blunt rebukes; but rather insinuate things into them, with address and artifice. What says Elihu, Job xxxiv. 18? *Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?* And, indeed, in this case, usually, it is most fit and decent that thy reproofs should not carry their own shape and form; but disguise them rather into parables or intreaties, or into any such humble and becoming method: yet, withal, let so much appear, as that they may well enough know thy drift and intent. For it becomes the wisdom and station of inferiors, so to order their speech, that, if it can but be interpreted as a reproof, their superiors may and will certainly know they meant it for such. Thus the Apostle bids us, 1 Tim. v. 1. *Rebuke not an elder, but rather intreat him as a father*: for, because their place and calling required respect and reverence, therefore the Apostle would not have them bluntly rebuked; but that the reproof should be clad in another dress, that they might appear to be rather intreaties than rebukes. We may observe, likewise, that, when Nathan was sent immediately by God to reprove King David, he doth

not attack him directly, and fall rudely upon him for his adultery and murder; but clothes his speech in a parable: and, when he had so represented the heinousness of his sin, so as by that means to make him first reprove and condemn himself, then he tells him, *Thou art the man.*

6. If thou wouldst have thy reproofs effectual, *especially beware that thou thyself art not guilty of those sins, which thou reprovest in another.*

It were, indeed, a temper to be wished and prayed for, that we could only respect how righteous the reproof were, and not how righteous the person is who gives it: for there is no more reason to reject sound admonition, because it comes from an unsound heart, than there is to stop our ears against good counsel, because it is delivered perhaps by an unsavoury breath. Yet, so it is, that, when men of defiled consciences and conversations reprove others, they are apt to justify themselves by recriminating; or, else, to think they do but sport and jest with them; or, thirdly, to hate them for gross hypocrites and dissemblers; or, lastly, to think they do but envy them their sins, and that they would engross all to themselves. It was a true observation of Pliny, in his Epistles, Lib. viii. Epist. 22. that there are some, *Qui sic aliorum vitiis irascuntur, quasi invideant*: “Who are so angry at other men’s vices, as if they envied them:” it cannot be hoped that the reproof of such should ever take place. But, when a man of a clear and unspotted name shall reprove the sins and vices of others, his rebukes carry authority with them: and, if they cannot reform, yet at least must they needs daunt and silence the offenders, that they shall have nothing to reply, no subterfuges nor evasions; but they must needs be convinced, that their sins are as evil as he represents them, by his own care and caution to avoid them.

V. The only thing that remains, is, to propound to you some MOTIVES, which may quicken you to the conscientious discharge of this much neglected duty.

And I shall but name some few; and leave them to your consideration, to be farther pressed upon you.

And, here, next to the express command of Almighty God, whose authority alone ought to prevail against all the difficulties, which we either find or fancy in the way of obedience thereunto:

Consider,

i. The GREAT BENEFIT, WHICH MAY REDOUND, BOTH TO THE REPROVER AND REPROVED.

1. To the *Reprover*.

(1) Thou shalt hereby provide thyself a friend, who may take the same liberty to reprove thee, when it shall be needful, and for thy great good.

And it may very well be thought, that the Apostle, upon this account, requires us to restore our fallen brother, with meek reproofs, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted: Gal. vi. 1. that is, that hereby we may purchase a true friend, who will be as faithful to us, as we have been to him. However, certainly it is the best and most generous way of procuring to ourselves true love and respect, from those, whom we have thus reformed. So, says Solomon, Prov. ix. 8. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee*: and, in another place, says he, *He, that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue*: Prov. xxviii. 23.

(2) Thou wilt hereby entitle thyself to that great and precious promise, Dan. xii. 3. that *They, that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they, that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever*: and to that other, of the Wise Man, Prov. xxiv. 25. *To them, that rebuke the wicked, shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them*.

(3) Thou shalt increase thy own graces and comforts, more than possibly thou couldst do by separating thyself from them.

Thy graces will be more confirmed, because reproving of others will engage thee to a greater watchfulness over thyself. Thy comforts also will be increased, because a conscientious discharge of this duty will be to thee a great evidence of the integrity and sincerity of thy heart.

2. The practice of this duty will be greatly profitable *unto him, that is reprov'd*.

How knowest thou but it may be a means to turn him from his iniquity? and so thou shalt prevent *a multitude of sins*, and *save a soul from death*: James v. 20. And hereby, likewise, we shall frustrate one of the great designs and artifices of the Devil; which is, to allure men to sin by the examples of those wickednesses, that pass unchecked and uncontroled in the world.

ii. Consider, THAT WE OURSELVES ALSO WERE DISOBEDIENT AND FOOLISH, SERVING DIVERS LUSTS AND PLEASURES: Tit. iii. 3. but were wrought upon, either by public or private reproof.

And why then should not we use the same charity towards others, which God hath been pleased to make effectual towards us?

iii. Consider, that the text makes it AN APPARENT SIGN OF HATING OUR BROTHER, IF WE FORBEAR JUSTLY TO REPROVE HIM. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise reprove him.*

So that he, who reproveth not his brother, hates him. Now he, that *hateth his brother is a murderer*, says St. John: 1 John iii. 15. and *no murderer hath eternal life*. Yea, we are guilty of soul-murder, which is so much the more heinous, by how much the soul is more precious than the body.

iv. Consider, that the performance of this duty, were it more universal, WOULD BE THE APTEST AND READIEST MEANS TO PREVENT SCHISM AND DIVISION.

The grand pretence for separation, is the wickedness of many who are Church-Members. Now our Saviour's method is, that such should be first reprov'd and admonish'd, before they be cast out: but it is a most preposterous and headlong course, which thousands in our days take, who cast themselves out of the communion of the Church, for the sins of those, who deserve to be cast out; and, rather than they will perform this ungrateful work of reproof, choose to separate: whereas, if they would make use of our Saviour Christ's advice, Mat. xviii. 15, 16. to reprove privately, and in case of obstinacy to convict publicly, there would be, as no need, so no pretence left for separation; but either their private reproofs would prevail to reform, or their public complaints and accusations to remove offenders.

v. Consider, that THE NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY BRINGS THE SIN AND GUILT OF OTHERS UPON YOUR OWN SOULS.

See, for this, that Scripture, Eph. v. 11. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*. If we reprove them not, we are partakers of their evil deeds, and deserve to be partakers of their torments.

A
DISCOURSE
ON
PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER:
WITH
EXHORTATIONS THEREUNTO:

FROM 1 THESS. v. 17.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

THIS Text is one of those many commands, which the Apostle lays down in this chapter. Being now almost at the end and close of his Epistle, and not willing to omit the mentioning of duties so necessary for their practice, he pours them out in short, but weighty exhortations. The connection betwixt most of them is dark; if there be any. I shall not therefore vex the words, by tacking them either to the precedent or subsequent verses by any forced coherence; but take them as they are in themselves, in one entire proposition: and so they contain in them a duty, and that is, Prayer; and the manner also of performing of it, and that is, *without ceasing*; and both of these do administer to us this plain Doctrine,

I. That IT IS A CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TO PRAY INCESSANTLY.

This is a plain and necessary point, and I intend to handle it in as plain and familiar a method.

And there are Two things, which I shall enquire into.

What it is to *pray*. And, then,

What it is to pray *without ceasing*.

i. I shall begin with the first, **WHAT IT IS TO PRAY.**

I answer: To pray, is, BY THE ASSISTANCE AND HELP OF THE HOLY GHOST, IN THE NAME AND MEDIATION OF JESUS CHRIST, WITH FAITH AND FERVENCY, TO MAKE AN HUMBLE REPRESENTATION OF OUR DESIRES UNTO GOD, FOR THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, WITH SUBMISSION TO HIS PLEASURE, AND WITH REFERENCE TO HIS HONOUR.

This is that holy duty of Prayer, in which, of all that belong to religion, the soul usually enjoys the most near and sweet communion with God. When we are oppressed with guilt, or overwhelmed with fears and griefs, what sweeter retreat than to betake ourselves to our God and to our Father, into whose bosom we may unload all our burdens? It is the greatest solace of an afflicted mind, to lie prostrate before the Lord, and melt itself down in holy tears and in holy affections at his feet. Hence it is said of Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18. that, after she had poured out her soul before God, *her countenance was no more sad*. And, therefore, this is not so much our duty, as our privilege. It is the happiness of the glorious angels in heaven, and of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, that they are always near unto God in their attendance upon him; that they are waiters about his throne: and Prayer gives to us the very same high privilege, and brings us into the presence and before the throne of the same God: only with this difference; they draw near to a Throne of Glory, and we draw near to a Throne of Grace.

Let us now take a more particular view of this excellent duty of Prayer, according to the description given of it.

1. *The Efficient Cause of Prayer is the Holy Ghost.*

Then we pray, when we breathe out those requests unto God, which the Holy Ghost hath breathed into us: and therefore it is said, Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered*. All prayer, which is not dictated by the Holy Ghost, is but howling, in God's esteem. And, though wicked men, in their distresses, may be very passionate and very vehement in their requests, yet they have no promise that their prayers shall prevail with God: sometimes, indeed, God doth hear them, and, out of his common bounty and goodness, grant to them those temporal good things which they crave: he, who hears *the young ravens when they cry*, he, who hears the lowing

of the oxen, sometimes also hears wicked men under their afflictions, when they roar to him as *a wild bull in a net*, as the Prophet expresseth it: but yet such prayers of wicked men, though they are answered, are never accepted. God accepts no petitions, but such as are presented to him through the intercession of Christ: now Christ makes intercession for none in heaven, but only for those, in whose hearts the Spirit makes intercession here upon earth: their prayers alone ascend up to God as sweet incense; being perfumed with that *much incense*, which Christ offers up *with the prayers of all the saints*. God always hears and answers them, either in the very thing for which they pray, or else in what oftentimes is far better: when they ask that, which will be to their own hurt; then he answers them graciously, by denying them. In James v. 16. the Apostle tells us, that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*: this, indeed, may seem a needless tautology, to say an effectual prayer availeth, for it is but one and the same thing to avail and to be effectual; but if we consult the original, we shall find the words may be translated, *The in-wrought prayer*; and, possibly, we may with more congruity render it thus, *The prayer of a righteous man wrought in him*; that is to say, by the Spirit of God: such a prayer availeth much.

2. As the efficient cause of our prayers is the Holy Ghost, so *the only Object of our Prayers is God*, for it is a representation of our wants and desires unto him.

Now God may be considered either essentially or personally; and, under both respects, we may direct our prayers unto him.

(1) If we consider the Persons of the glorious Trinity, so they are all adorable with this act of divine worship.

None will deny, but that we may direct our prayers unto God the Father. And that God the Son may be distinctly prayed unto, we have an uncontrollable instance in that of St. Stephen; Acts vii. 59. *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*: yea, and this adoration is due not only to the Divine Nature of Christ, which was from all eternity the same in being, majesty, and glory with the Father; but it is also due unto Christ as Mediator, as God-Man, and so his Human Nature is also joined in the participation of this high honour, through its union to the divine nature: the very angels in heaven are commanded to adore him as God-Man, as Mediator; Heb. i. 6. *When he bringeth in his first-begotten into the world*; that is, when he brought him into

the world as man, *he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.* Indeed we no where in Scripture, as I remember, have express mention made of any prayer directed to the Holy Ghost: yet whosoever allows him to be God cannot deny him this worship of prayer: if we must believe in him, we may then certainly call upon him; as the Apostle argues, Rom. x. 14. yea, we have an instance of the Seraphims giving praise unto him, which is one part of prayer, Isa. vi. 3. they cried one to another, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts*: this God is the same, who, in verses 9, 10, 11. bids the Prophet say to the people, *Hear ye, indeed, but understand not.... Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears*: this is that God, whom the Seraphims adored; and this is that God, who spake to the Prophet; and the Apostle, quoting this very place out of Isaiah, tells us, Acts xxviii. 25. that it was the Holy Ghost spake: so that, by comparing these two places together, you see plainly that the Holy Ghost is God; and that he is to be adored by us with the same worship, with which we worship the Father and the Son, for the Holy Ghost is the Lord God of Hosts; which St. Paul refers to the Holy Ghost, *Well spake the Holy Ghost concerning them.* Thus, if we consider God personally, each Person in the Trinity may well be the Object of our Prayers.

(2) Consider God essentially; and so we are also to direct our prayers to him.

To consider God essentially, is, to have the eye of our faith fixed upon his attributes; not upon his person: to consider him, when we pray to him, not as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost; but only as an infinitely glorious, wise, powerful, gracious God, and the like; to look upon him as a most pure essence, whose presence is every where, whose presence and goodness are over all things; to conceive him to be an infinite being altogether unconceivable: this is to consider God essentially. Now this notion of God is equally common to all the Three Persons: and therefore this is the most fit and congruous way when we come to God in prayer, to represent before us his attributes: we need not select out any one Person in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, to direct our prayers unto; unless it be in some cases, wherein their particular offices are more immediately concerned: but, when we pray to him who is almighty, who is all-wise, infinitely holy, infinitely just and merciful, we

pray at once to the whole Trinity, both to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So when we pray according to that holy form which Christ hath taught us, *Our Father, which art in heaven*, Father there denotes not only God the Father, the First Person in the Trinity; but it is a relative attribute belonging equally to all the Persons in the Trinity. God is the Father of all men, by creation and providence; and he is especially the Father of the faithful, by regeneration and adoption: now as these actions of creation, regeneration, and adoption are common to the whole Trinity, so also is the title of Father common to the whole Trinity. God, the First Person, is indeed eminently called the Father, but that is not in respect of us, but in respect of Christ his only begotten Son from all eternity: in respect of us, the whole Trinity is *Our Father, which art in heaven*; and, when we pray so, we pray both to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, to all the Three Persons. Yea, and it may seem very probable, that when Christ prayed, Matth. xxvi. 39. *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done*: I say, it is probable that this prayer was not directed to God the Father personally, but to the whole Trinity; for we must consider that Christ prays here only as he was man, and that appears by his distinguishing of his will from and submitting it to God's will: now not only God the Father, but the whole Trinity was the Father of Christ as man; yea, Christ himself, according to his divine nature, was the Father of his human nature; and, therefore, praying, as man, to his Father, that that cup might pass from him, he prayed to all the Three Persons, both to God the Father, and to God the Son, and to God the Holy Ghost.

And, thus much, for the Object to whom we must direct our prayers; and that is to God only, whether considered personally or essentially.

3. Observe also *the Matter of our Prayers*. It must be a representation of our desires to God, for such things as are according to his will.

So we have it, 1 John v. 14. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. God's will, in bestowing a desired mercy upon us, is best known by the promises, that he hath made to us. Which promises are of two kinds: some refer to temporal blessings, and others refer to grace and glory:

(1) Grace and Glory are promised absolutely.

It is that, which we are commanded all of us to seek after:

and, therefore, here can lie no mistake upon us, while we beg these; for there is no doubt while we pray for grace and glory, but that we do it according to the will of God. Here, we may be earnest and importunate, that God would sanctify and save our souls: and, while we ask this, and make this the matter of our requests, we are under an impossibility of asking amiss; yea, and the more violent we are, and the more resolute to take no denial at the hands of God, the more pleasing is this holy force, since it shews a perfect conformity and concurrence in our wills unto his will, who hath told us, It is his will, *even our sanctification*: 1 Thess. iv. 3. This was one part of that violence, which our Saviour saith the kingdom of heaven suffered in the days of John the Baptist. It is an invasion that is acceptable unto God, when we storm heaven by prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears: when we plant against it unutterable sighs and groans, this is such a battery, that those eternal ramparts cannot hold out long against it. We may pray absolutely for Grace and Glory.

(2) Though we may pray thus, absolutely and with a holy peremptoriness, for grace and glory, saying to God as Jacob to the angel that wrestled with him, I will not let thee go until thou hast blessed me with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Jesus Christ: yet, secondly, for the Degrees of Grace and for the comforts of the Holy Ghost, we must pray conditionally; if the Lord will.

For these things are not absolutely necessary, neither are they absolutely promised to us by God. Neither any degree of grace nor any consolation of the Spirit is absolutely promised to us. But, however, our prayers ought to be, so much the more fervent and importunate for these things, than for outward, temporal things; by how much these are of far greater concernment, than the other.

(3) To pray for outward and worldly blessings is not contrary to the will of God, for he hath promised to bestow them.

But then, as his promise is conditional, if it may stand with our good: so, truly, must our prayers be conditional, that God would give them to us, if it may stand with his will and with our good. Whatsoever we thus ask, we do it according to the will of God; and we are sure of speeding in our request, either by the obtaining of our desires, or by being blessed with a denial. For, alas! we are blind and ignorant creatures, and cannot look

into the designs and drift of Providence, and see how God hath laid in order good and evil in his own purpose: oftentimes, we mistake evil for good, because of the present appearance of good that it hath: yea, so short-sighted are we, that we can look no farther than outward and present appearance. But God, who sees through the whole series and connexion of his own counsels, knows, many times, that those things, which we account and desire as good, are really evil: and therefore it is our wisdom, to resign up all our desires to his disposal, and to say, "Lord, though such temporal enjoyments may seem good and desirable to me at present, yet thou art infinitely wise, and thou knowest what the consequence and issue of them will be: I beg them, if they may stand with thy will; and if thou seest they will be as really good for me, as I suppose them now to be. If they be not so, I beg the favour of a denial." This is the right frame, that a Christian ought to have upon his heart, when he comes to beg temporal mercies of God; and, whilst he thus asks any worldly comforts, he cannot ask amiss. It was an excellent saying of the Satirist, "We ask those things of God," says he, "which please our present humours and desires: but God gives those things, which are best and fittest for us: for we are dearer to him," saith the Heathen, "than we are to ourselves." "And," says another, very well, "it is mercy in God, not to hear us when we ask things that are evil:" and when he refuseth us in such requests, it is that he might not circumvent us in our own prayers; for, indeed, whilst we ask rashly and intemperately whatever we foolishly set our hearts upon, God need take no other course to plague and punish us, than by hearing and answering us.

So much for the Matter of our prayers: it must be for things, that are according to God's will.

4. Observe, also, THE MANNER, IN WHICH OUR PRAYERS MUST BE DIRECTED UNTO GOD.

That is,

(1) We must pray in the Name of Christ.

Before the Fall, man might boldly go to God, in his own name; and speak to him, upon his own account: but, since the great breach made betwixt heaven and earth, since that great quarrel and enmity arose betwixt God and man, there is no hope of man's finding acceptance with God, upon his own account; and therefore he must go to God, in the name of a Mediator. Hence Christ saith, *If ye ask any thing in my name,*

I will do it for you: John xiv. 14. Now to ask in the name of Christ, is nothing else, but, in all our addresses to God, to plead his merits; and to depend upon his mediation, for the obtaining of those good things, which we desire. It was truly said, *God heareth not sinners:* John ix. 31: and how then can we, who are sinners, yea the chief of sinners, hope for audience and acceptance with him, who heareth none such? But, though God heareth not sinners, yet he always heareth his Son, who is continually making intercession for sinners; yea, and he always heareth sinners, who come to him in the name of his Son, and by faith tender up his merits, through which alone they expect favour and to prevail with God. All things go by favour and friendship, in the Court of Heaven: if we stand upon our own merits and deserts, we shall be shamefully disappointed in our expectations: no merit takes place in heaven, but only the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, while we argue that by faith with God, we come to him in the name of his Son.

(2) Our prayers must be put up with Faith.

James i. 6. *Let him ask in faith*, says the Apostle, *nothing wavering. For let not such a man*, that is, let not such a man that wavers, *think to receive any good thing of God.* So, in Heb. xi. 6. *He, that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.* Faith is the soul's hand, whereby it receives those blessings, which God willingly bestows. This is the reason, why, though we do so often pray to God, yet we are still so indigent and necessitous: God's ears are not heavy, his arms are not shortened, neither are his bowels dried up: no; still he hath the same power, the same will, and the same love to his children that ever he had; but we want a hand to receive those mercies, which God hath a heart and a hand to give forth unto us: and that is the reason of our necessitousness, notwithstanding we do so often come before God in prayer.

(3) Our prayers must be put up as with faith, so with Fervency also.

And therefore it is required, that we should be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:* Rom. xii. 11. and so the fore-cited place, *The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* We should strive to kindle in our souls a holy flame of heavenly affections, when we come to God in prayer. The prayers of the saints were typified, under the Old Law, by incense; but no incense was to be offered up, without fire: so,

truly, there should be no prayer offered up to God, without the fire and flame of holy affections and fervency. How do you think that a dull and heavy prayer should mount up as high as heaven? or, that God should hearken to or regard what we speak, when we scarce regard what we speak ourselves?

This for the Manner of our prayer.

5. We must observe THE END AT WHICH WE OUGHT TO AIM IN OUR PRAYERS; and that is, the glory of God. We must pray for those things which we want, with submission to his will and with reference to his glory. That must be the end of our prayers.

Our design, in begging any thing from God, should be, that he may have it out of us again in his service, and to his honour and glory; and, while we propose this to ourselves, we are like to speed in our requests: we may well hope our prayers will be successful, when we beg mercies, not to consume them but to husband them; that the increase of all may return again to God, who gave them. And can we think that God will be sparing, when, if I may so speak with reverence, it concerns his own gain to be liberal? Wicked and unthankful men are but like vapours and exhalations drawn up out of the earth, which do but eclipse the sun that raises them: so, when God raiseth up wicked men by his bounty and goodness, they only serve to eclipse and stain his glory in the world. Whereas, godly men are like rivers, which, as they receive all their streams from the sea, so they return all again into the sea: so these, whatever they receive from God, they improve all for and return all again unto God. And, therefore, they may well hope to speed, who beg mercies at the hand of God, that they may return all again unto the glory of God.

So much for the qualifications of prayer. It must be made by the assistance of the Holy Ghost; in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ; with faith and fervency; making an humble representation of our wants and desires unto God, for those things, which are according to his will, with submission to his pleasure, and with reference to his honour.

And, thus much, for the First thing, What it is to pray.

ii. The Second thing propounded, was to shew you, What it is TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

And this I shall do Negatively and Positively.

1. *Negatively.* To pray without ceasing is not always to be actually engaged in this duty of prayer; either orally, verbally, or mentally: it is not that all other duties shall be swallowed up and give place unto prayer.

This was an old error of the Messalians and Euchites, who began 340 years after Christ; whose opinion it was, that, because here and elsewhere in Scripture we are commanded to *pray continually*, and to *pray always*, and the like, therefore the whole work of a Christian was only to pray. A most fond and foolish error! for what is the great end of prayer, but that we may thereby obtain that grace from God, which may enable us to perform other duties of religion and holiness? Certainly, God doth not blow up one duty by another: he, who hath commanded us to *pray without ceasing*, hath likewise commanded us to hear, read, meditate, and the like. Yea, although prayer be so spiritual and so heavenly a duty, yet we are not to neglect the duties of our particular callings, only that we may have the more time for prayer: God hath divided out the work, and hath given unto every thing its season, in which alone it is beautiful. Prayer makes melody in God's ears, then only when it is well timed: when we juggle out one duty by another, beside the sinful omission of what we should perform, that, which we do perform, becomes unacceptable, because unseasonable. Neither can we hope that that prayer will prevail with God, which appears before him guilty of the death and murder, if I may so phrase it, of other duties. This, therefore, cannot be the meaning of it, that we should do nothing but pray.

Therefore,

2. *Absolutely or Positively*, I shall give you a Fourfold interpretation of this expression of the Apostle, pray without ceasing.

(1) That may be said to be done without ceasing, which is done constantly, and at set times and seasons.

So we have the word used, Gen. viii. 22. *While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease*: that is, they shall not cease, in their courses and appointed times. So, here, *Pray without ceasing*: that is, observe a constant course of prayer, at fixed and appointed times; still keeping yourselves from any superstitious observations. And, thus, Exod. xxix. 42. the daily sacrifice is called *a continual burnt-offering*; and yet it was offered up only every morning and every evening, and yet God accounts it a continual offering. So, here, *Pray*

continually, or *without ceasing*: that is, keep up frequent and appointed times for prayer, without intermission.

(2) To pray without ceasing, is to pray with all importunity and vehemency.

So, in Acts xii. 5. *the Church* is said to pray for St. Peter *without ceasing*: that is, they were very earnest and importunate, and would give God no rest until he heard them. So, also, in the parable of the unjust steward, which our Saviour spake on purpose to shew how prevalent with God importunity is, Luke xviii. 1. it is said, that the Lord would teach them that they *ought always to pray*: that is, that they ought to pray earnestly and importunately, not giving over till they were heard. So, also, 1 Sam. vii. 7, 8. the children of Israel entreated Samuel not to cease crying to the Lord for them: that is, that he would improve all his interest at the Throne of Grace to the utmost in their behalfs. So we are bid to *pray without ceasing*: that is, to be earnest and vehement, resolving to take no denial at the hands of God. But yet we must do other duties also, though we are vehement in this. We may learn how to demean ourselves in this case towards God, by beggars who sometimes come to your doors and bring their work along with them: they beg importunately, and yet they work betwixt whiles: so also should we do: we should beg as importunately of God, as if we depended merely upon his charity; and yet, betwixt whiles, we should work as industriously, as if we were ourselves to get our livings with our own hands.

(3) To *pray without ceasing*, is to take all occasions, at every turn, to be darting up our souls unto God in holy meditations and ejaculations.

And this we may and ought to do, when we hear or read the word, or whatever duty of religion we are engaged about: yea, this we may and ought to do, in our worldly employments. If your hearts and affections be heavenly, your thoughts will force out a passage, through the crowd and tumult of worldly businesses, to heaven. Ejaculations are swift messengers, which require not much time to perform their errands in. For there is a holy mystery in pointing our earthly employments with these heavenly ejaculations, as men point their writings sometimes with stops; ever now and then shooting up a short mental prayer unto heaven: such pauses as these are you will find to be no impediments to your worldly affairs. This is the way for a Christian to be retired and private, in the midst of a multitude; to turn his

shop or his field into a closet; to trade for earth, and yet to get heaven also into the bargain. So we read of Nehemiah ii. 4. that, while the king was discoursing to him of the state of Judea, Nehemiah prayed unto God: that is, he sent up secret prayers to God, which, though they escaped the king's notice and observation, yet were so prevalent as to bow and incline his heart.

(4) There is yet something more in this praying *without ceasing*. And that is this: we may then be said to *pray without ceasing*, when we keep our hearts in such a frame, as that we are fit at all times to vent ourselves before God in prayer.

When we keep alive and cherish a praying spirit; and can, upon all opportunities, draw near to God, with full souls and with quick and vigorous affections: this is to *pray without ceasing*. And this I take to be the most genuine, natural sense of the words, and the true scope of the Apostle here; to have the habit of prayer, inclining them always freely and sweetly to breathe out their requests unto God, and to take all occasions to prostrate themselves before his Throne of Grace.

Now those, who would maintain this praying temper, must be especially careful of Two things.

[1] That they do not too much engulf themselves in the Businesses and Pleasures of this life.

For this will exceedingly damp and deaden the heart to this holy duty. As earth, cast upon the fire, puts it out; so the world, when it is spread over the affections, must needs stifle and extinguish that holy flame, which should ascend up to heaven. How hard is it for a man, who oppresseth himself with a heap of businesses, to raise his heart unto God under all that load! How hard is it for those, who let out their hearts thus to and fro, a thousand ways, to summon them in the next moment to attend upon God, with that awful and serious frame which becomes all those who appear before him! When we come to prayer reaking hot out of the affairs of this world, we find our hearts subject to manifold distractions and discomposures; and our thoughts scattered like bees, still flying from one flower to another, still bringing some intelligence from worldly objects, even then when we are about divine employments.

[2] If you would maintain a praying temper of soul, be careful not to fall into the commission of any known, presumptuous Sin.

The guilt of sin lying upon the conscience, will exceedingly deaden the heart to prayer. Alas! how can we go to God with any freedom of spirit; how can we call him Father, with any boldness and confidence; while we are conscious to ourselves, that we have daringly provoked him by some wilful offence? I may appeal to your own experience in this: do not your consciences fly in your faces? do they not take you by the throat and even choak your speech, while you are praying, with some such suggestions as these? "What! can I pray for the pardon of sin, who frequently commit that, which I know to be sin? Shall I dare to lift up unclean hands before his pure and holy eyes, or to speak to him in prayer, when as those sins, which rankle and fester in my conscience, must needs make my breath unsavory and noisome to him? Will the Lord hear such prayers? or, if he doth hear them, will he not account them an abomination?" You now, whose consciences thus accuse you, do you not find such reflections as these to be great deadenings to your hearts, great damps to duty, and clippings of the wings of the Spirit of God and takings-off of the wheels of the soul, so that it drives on but slowly and heavily in the performance of that duty? Certainly, guilt is the greatest impediment to duty in the world: for it takes off from the freeness and filialness of our spirits; and fills us with distrust, diffidence, and a slavish fear of coming before God, rather as our Judge than as our Father. And therefore we find, that, as soon as Adam had sinned against his Maker, he hid himself from him: yea, and we may observe in ourselves, what a slavish dejectedness and deadness seizeth upon us, when we come to God in duty, after we have wronged him by any known sin: how doth this make us come with such misgiving fears, as if we would not have God to take notice that we were in his presence; making us to be continually in pain until the duty be done!

And, thus, you see what it is to *pray without ceasing*. It is to pray constantly, at set times and seasons: it is to pray importunately and vehemently: it is, upon all occasions, to be sending up holy ejaculations unto God: and, especially, to keep alive and cherish a praying frame of heart; which whosoever would do, he must beware of immersing himself in the world, and of committing any known and presumptuous sin.

And, so much, for the Doctrinal part.

II. The APPLICATION shall be, to stir us up and excite us to the performance of this holy duty; wherein, indeed, the vitals of religion and holiness do consist.

And, to press this upon you, consider with me these following particulars:

i. PRAYER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST SIGNS OF A MAN'S NEW BIRTH.

As, in the natural birth, we know the child is living, by its crying, when it comes into the world; so also, in this spiritual birth, it is an evidence, that we are born living souls to God, when we cry mightily unto God in prayer. And, therefore, in Acts ix. 11. when God sent Ananias unto Paul, that he might take off that fear from him which might otherwise seize upon him in going to such an enraged persecutor as he was, he tells him St. Paul was changed; *for, behold, he prayeth*. This is an infallible sign that we are children of God, when we can, with a holy reverence and boldness, cry *Abba, Father*.

ii. Consider: IT IS A GREAT AND INESTIMABLE PRIVILEGE, THAT GOD WILL PERMIT US TO APPROACH SO NEAR TO HIMSELF; that he will permit such vile dust and ashes as we are to speak to him, who is the *God of the Spirits of all Flesh*.

The holy angels in heaven stand always ministering in the presence of God; and prayer doth, in some kind, associate us with them: it brings us to lie prostrate at the feet of God; at whose feet, also, angels and all the powers in heaven do, with much more humility than we, fall down and worship: we and they fall down together at the feet of the Great God; we, in prayer; and they, in praises. This privilege cost Jesus Christ dear, for it is through him, as the Apostle speaks, that we have access with boldness unto the Throne of Grace: all access thither was barred against sinners, till Christ opened a passage for us by his own death and most precious blood: and shall not we make use of a privilege, purchased for us at so dear a rate as that is? hath Christ shed his blood to procure us liberty to pray, and shall not we spend our breath in praying? hath Christ died such a cursed, cruel death, to purchase liberty for us to pray, and shall we rather choose to die an eternal death than make use of it? This is to despise the blood of Jesus Christ; to offer a high affront and indignity unto him; to account it a vile and contemptible thing, when we make no more

esteem of that for the purchase of which he shed his precious blood. We look upon it as a great privilege, to have free and frequent access to those, who are much our superiors; and shall we not reckon it a much higher privilege, that we may at all times approach the presence of him, who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and higher than the highest, as we may do at all times in prayer?

iii. Prayer IS THE MOST SOVEREIGN MEDICINE AND REMEDY FOR AN AFFLICTED MIND.

Nothing is so desirable in this world as a faithful friend, to whom we may at all times unbosom ourselves, and make all our secrets and grievances known. Now prayer directs us to go to God himself: he is our most faithful friend, who can best counsel and best help us; and prayer is a means whereby we reveal the secrets and troubles of our souls unto him. Prayer is our discoursing with God: when our hearts swell with grief and are ready to break within us, how sweet is it then to take God apart and give our hearts vent! Prayer is a making of our case known to him, and a spreading of our wants before him; casting all our burdens upon him, who hath promised to sustain us.

iv. Consider: Prayer IS A MEANS APPOINTED BY GOD FOR THE OBTAINING OF THOSE BLESSINGS AND MERCIES, OF WHICH WE STAND IN NEED.

For all things are God's: he is the great Lord and Proprietor both of Heaven and Earth: whether they be spiritual or temporal mercies that we desire, if it be wealth, strength or wisdom, all are his. If we would have spiritual blessings conferred upon us; our faith, our love, our patience, our humility, strengthened and encreased; he is the God of all these graces, and prayer is a means appointed by God to convey all these unto us. Our prayers and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well: while the one ascends, the other descends: so, while our prayers ascend to God in heaven, his mercies and blessings descend down upon us.

v. Consider: ALL OUR SUPPLIES ARE ONLY FOR OUR PRESENT EXIGENCIES; TO SERVE US ONLY FROM HAND TO MOUTH.

The stock of mercy is not our's, but God's: he still keeps it in his own hands. And this he doth, that he may keep us in a

constant dependence upon him, and in a constant expectation of mercy from him. Our wants grow up very thick about us; and, if we did but observe it, we should find every day, yea every hour, new cause to present new requests and supplications unto God: and, therefore, as our necessities never cease, so neither should our prayers.

vi. Consider this: IF YOU WILL NOT BE PERSUADED TO PRAY, YOU SHALL ONE DAY BE MADE TO HOWL.

You, who will not now look up to heaven in prayer, shall hereafter look up in blaspheming: Isai. viii. 21. *They shall fret themselves*, says the Prophet, *and curse their King and their God*: that is, in their horrid despair and anguish, they shall curse and blaspheme both God and their king, that is the Devil, and they shall *look upward*. Though now wicked men will not look to heaven, yet then God will force them to look upwards.

III. TWO OBJECTIONS, possibly, may be made against this duty of prayer.

FIRST OBJECTION. "God doth beforehand know all our wants and desires, and therefore what necessity is there of prayer?"

To this I answer, with St. Augustin, God doth require that we should pray to him, not so much to make known what our will and desire is, for that he cannot be ignorant of: but it is for the exercise of our desires, and to draw forth our affections towards those things that we beg at his hands, that thereby we may be made fit to receive what he is ready to give.

SECOND OBJECTION. Say some, "It is in vain to pray, because all our prayers cannot alter the course of God's Providence. We cannot, by our most fervent prayers, change the method of God's decrees: if he hath resolved from eternity to bestow such a mercy upon us, we shall receive it whether we pray or pray not: if he hath resolved we shall never partake of it, if we do pray, all our prayers will be in vain."

I have long since answered this Objection; and told you, that, it is true, God's providence is immutable: but the same providence, that orders the end to be obtained, hath likewise ordered the means by which it must be obtained: as God hath decreed blessings to us, so he hath decreed that they should be obtained by prayer; and therefore we must pray that we may

obtain those blessings, for that is the means which God hath decreed for the obtaining of them.

IV. Some possibly may say, "If we must thus pray without ceasing, how shall we be assured that God will hear us? If it be our duty to pray, **HOW SHALL WE PRAY** so as that our prayers may become acceptable unto God?"

I answer,

i. If you would have God hear you when you pray, **YOU MUST BE SURE TO HEAR HIM WHEN HE SPEAKS.**

See that place, Prov. i. 24, 25, 28. *Because I have called, and ye have refused....and have set at nought all my counsel....therefore, says God, ye shall call, but I will not answer: ye shall seek me early, but....shall not find me:* God stops his ears against their prayers, who stop their ears against his law. So you find it, Prov. xxviii. 9. *He, that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.* And this is but equity with God, to refuse to hear them, who refuse to hear him: wherefore should God give attention to us, when we pray; more than we to him, when he speaks?

ii. If you would have God hear you, **YOU MUST BE GREATLY AFFECTED WITH WHAT YOU SPEAK YOURSELVES.**

Zui frigidè rogat, docet negare: "He, who asks coldly, begs only a denial." Certainly, we cannot in reason expect that God should regard when we pray, when we do not regard ourselves what we pray. How do you think a lazy prayer, that scarce drops out of your lips, should have strength and vigour enough to reach heaven, and to pierce through the ears of God? If you expect to shoot up a prayer to heaven, you must draw it from a soul full bent.

iii. We must come to God **WITH RESOLUTIONS TO WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.**

We must not give over prayer, because God doth not presently bestow a mercy upon us that we desire: this is not only to lose the mercy itself, but to lose our prayers also. God is a great God and *King above all gods*, and it is but his due state to be waited long upon: in this sense, it is true, He, that believeth, maketh not haste. Certainly, if we believe God to be infinitely wise to know the best season to give us what we crave both for

his advantage and for ours also, we shall not be in haste in our suits, or peevish because we are not straight answered: but shall patiently wait God's leisure; as knowing that God hath read our petitions, and will grant them when he seeth the fittest time.

iv. If you would pray so as to be heard, BE SURE YOU PUT UP NO REQUESTS IN THE BEHALF OF YOUR LUSTS.

The Apostle gives the reason why, of so many prayers that are put up to God, so few prove successful: James iv. 3. *Ye ask, and receive not; because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts.* Now to ask blessings from God for our lusts, is when we beg any outward mercy, be it wealth, or health, or the like, with reference to the gratifying of our own carnal and corrupt desires. Therefore in James iv. 4. the Apostle calls them *adulterers and adulteresses*. Such men are indeed like adulteresses in this: as they ask their husbands those things, many times, which they bestow upon them whom they love better; so wicked men do, many times, ask those mercies and blessings of God, which they intend to spend upon their lusts that they love better than God: and therefore it is no wonder that God, who knows their secret thoughts and intents, denies them.

v. YOU MUST PUT SOME STRESS UPON YOUR PRAYERS, if you would have them heard and accepted.

You must believe, that it is to some purpose, that you pray. If we think it is of no great concernment, to pray; God will think it is of no great concernment, to give what we pray for.

vi. YOU MUST TAKE HEED ALSO, THAT YOU DO NOT PUT TOO MUCH STRESS UPON YOUR PRAYERS.

That you do not set them up in the stead of Christ; that you do not expect to merit by your prayers the things which you pray for: but only look upon them as a means and ordinance, which God hath appointed, to obtain those good things that you stand in need of.

vii. You must be sure TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST YOUR FRIEND, WHEN YOU COME UNTO GOD; or else all your prayers are no better than scattered in the air, or spilt in the carriage.

Benjamin was a type of Christ, in this respect: Joseph chargeth his brethren, that they should not dare to see his face

again, unless they brought their brother Benjamin with them. So, truly, they shall find no welcome with God, who do not bring their elder brother Jesus Christ in the arms of their faith, and plead his merit and his righteousness for the obtaining of their desires.

So much for this time and text.

TRUE HAPPINESS.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY, JUNE THE 17th, 1690.

FROM REV. xxii. 14.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, THAT THEY
MAY HAVE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, AND MAY ENTER
THROUGH THE GATES INTO THE CITY.

THESE words, which I have now read, consist of these Two
parts :

A Proposition: *They, that do God's commandments, are
blessed.*

Here is the Proof of this proposition: *They have a right
to the Tree of Life, and shall enter through the gates
into the city.*

It is the connection of both these together, which I intend
chiefly to speak unto.

I. Give me leave, as a preliminary to the ensuing discourse,
to shew you what is contained in the first and great word in my
text; and that is the word BLESSED.

There is therefore a Twofold Beatitude or Blessedness. The
one is perfect and consummate; the other, initial and incom-
plete.

i. The FORMER is the complection of all good, perfective of
our natures; and our entire and satisfying enjoyment of it. This
blessedness is only attainable in heaven: for God alone is the
centre of all good; and all the good, which is desirable in this
world, is but as so many lines drawn from the centre, to the
utmost circumference of the creation. There is nothing, that
can supply the wants, perform the hopes, fulfil the desires,

without confinement circumscribe, without cloying satisfy the most enlarged capacities of a rational soul, but only that God, who is infinitely, universally, and indefectively good; and therefore he alone is our objective happiness. And our formal happiness is our relation to and union with this all-comprehensive and incomprehensible good; our assimilation to him, and participation from him of all those perfections, which our natures are capable of enjoying, but which our understandings not now capable of knowing. But this consummate blessedness is reserved for our unknown reward hereafter; and is not that, which my text here speaks of.

ii. There is, therefore, an IMPERFECT and INITIAL BLESSEDNESS, which consists in a preparation for and a tendency unto the other. As those are said to be accursed, whose sins and vices prepare them for eternal perdition; so those, likewise, are said to be blessed, whose grace and holiness prepare them for eternal bliss and happiness.

Now such as these are blessed in a Fourfold respect.

1. They are blessed in *Semine*: "in the Seed."

They go forth bearing precious seed, and shall doubtless rejoice in a plentiful harvest. So the Psalmist tells us, Ps. xcvi. 11. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*: and though they often appear clods of earth, ploughed up, harrowed, and broken with affliction; yet is there that blessed seed cast into them, which will certainly sprout up to immortality and eternal life: as all the beauties of a flower lie couched in a small, unsightly seed. And so, truly, grace is glory in the seed; and glory is but grace full blown.

2. They are blessed in *Primitiis*: "in the First-Fruits."

They have already received some part of their eternal felicity, in the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost; which are therefore called *the first-fruits of the Spirit*, by the Apostle, Rom. viii. 23. and *the earnest of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. i. 22. and *the earnest of our inheritance*, Eph. i. 14. Now, as the earnest is always part of the bargain, and the first-fruits are always of the same kind with the whole harvest, so is it here: the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost are the very same now, that they shall be in heaven itself. And therefore the Apostle blesseth God, *who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ*: Eph. i. 3. Better, indeed, they shall be in

heaven, but not other: here, our graces often languish under the load and pressure of corruption; but, in heaven, they shall be for ever vigorous and triumphant: here, our waters of comfort often fail us, our cistern is often dried up and our bottle spent; but, in heaven, we shall for ever lie at the fountain of living waters, and take in divine communications as they immediately flow from the divine essence, without having them deadened or flatted in the conveyance. But, yet, both by these imperfect graces and comforts, we do truly and properly enjoy God: the enjoyment of whom, in any measure, is happiness; but, in the highest measure, is heaven itself. If, therefore, the mass and lump be blessedness, the first-fruits must be blessed also.

3. They are blessed *in Spe*: “*in Hope.*”

Whence it is called by the Apostle, *that blessed hope*: Titus ii. 13; a blessed hope it is, because that, which we hope for, is eternal blessedness. The hope of worldly things is commonly more tormenting, than the enjoyment of them can be satisfying: it is a hope, which vitiates and deflowers its objects; and so mightily overrates them in the fancy, that, when they come to pass, our hope is rather frustrated than accomplished: and, were it not for that impatience which is the constant attendant of this hope, it would be a problem hard to be resolved, whether expectation or fruition were the more eligible estate: vain, therefore, and wretched must needs be the hopes of those things, which cannot answer what is expected from them; like a golden dream to a beggar, or the dream of a furnished table to one that is hunger-starved. But, the hopes of heaven can never impoverish the glories of it: for they are infinite and inexhaustible; and God hath laid up for his, that, which the heart of man cannot conceive.

A Christian's hope hath Two prerogatives above any worldly hope.

(1) One is, that it may attain to a full and final assurance.

As the Apostle speaks to the Hebrews; Heb. vi. 11. where he calls it, *the full assurance of hope unto the end*. A hope it is, because the object of it is a future good, desired and expected. But yet it is a hope, that is joined with a full assurance of the event: a hope, that may flower up into such a certainty, as to have no mixture of fear or doubting in its composition; but may be as sure of the heavenly inheritance, as if our reversion

were already in actual possession. Whereas worldly hope can never be secure, but some providence or other may interpose to disappoint it.

(2) The other prerogative of a Christian's hope, is, that though it be thus fully assured, yet the accomplishment of it shall always have the sweet relish of surprise and wonder.

For the happiness will be far greater than the hope, and the inheritance larger than the expectation; whereas earthly hopes, if they grow to any degree of confidence of success, upon frustration they turn into impatience and rage. Or if perhaps they do succeed, the sweetness of the accomplishment was long before sucked out and devoured by our greedy expectation: the game is torne and eaten, before the huntsman can come in.

And, upon both these accounts, the pious and obedient Christian is blessed in hope. It is a blessed hope, that shall certainly be accomplished: and a blessed hope, the accomplishing of which shall infinitely exceed our expectations; and fill us, not with shame, but with eternal admiration and wonder.

4. They are blessed *in Right and Title*.

And, upon this very account, especially, my text pronounceth those blessed, that do God's commandments, because they have *a right to the Tree of Life, and to enter in through the gates into the city.*

II. Now these expressions, according to the genius and style of this whole book, are mystical and allusive: and, for the explaining of them, I must shew,

What the Tree of Life is.

What is this City, into which they have a right to enter.

What it is to enter through the Gates into the City.

What Right it is, which obedience to God's commandments gives us to the Tree of Life, and to enter into the city.

i. For the first of these, what this TREE of LIFE is.

I answer: We find mention made of this Tree of Life in two other places of this dark prophecy.

The one is in ver. 2. of this chapter: *On either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* But this, very probably,

may be only an enigmatical representation of the doctrine of the Gospel.

Let us then consult the other place, where mention is made of this Tree of Life: and that is in Rev. ii. 7. *To him, that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* Now this carries a plain allusion to that description of the earthly paradise, of which we read, Gen. ii. 9. where it is said, God planted *the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden.* Now this Tree of Life was so called, not that it had any natural virtue to perpetuate man's life to immortality, but only from its typical and sacramental use; God having appointed the eating thereof as a sign and pledge of our immortality, had we continued in our innocence and obedience. And therefore we find, that, upon the fall, God set a guard upon this tree; and, as it were, excommunicates sinful Adam from partaking of this Sacrament of the Covenant of Works, which was both a sign and seal of immortality; signifying thereby, that sinners have no right to eternal life, according to the terms of the first covenant. But this right being again restored to us by Jesus Christ, therefore they are pronounced blessed that do God's commandments, because they have a *right to the Tree of Life*: that is, to that eternal life and immortality, which is brought to light by the Gospel, and to which the Tree of Life in paradise was a sacrament and emblem.

ii. Let us enquire what is this CITY, into which those, who do God's commandments, shall enter.

And we have a most large and glorious description made of it in chap. xxi. of this book, from v. 10. to the end of the chapter. And, in brief, it is nothing else but Heaven; the *New Jerusalem, that holy city, the city of the Living God*, into which no unclean thing shall enter. *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers....and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*: chap. xxii. 15.

iii. What is it TO ENTER THROUGH THE GATES INTO THIS CITY.

I answer: Though, in the foregoing chapter, this city is described to have *twelve gates*, and in them *the names of the twelve tribes of....Israel*; to signify to us, that, through the grace of the Gospel, there is a passage and an inlet into heaven for all those who are true Israelites; yet, in true propriety of speech, there is but one way and but one gate to heaven. Yea, and

our Saviour tells us, that way is narrow, and that gate is strait : for so we find his words ; *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life ; and few there be that find it* : Matth. vii. 14. The commandments of God are this gate to the heavenly city ; and the two Tables of the Law are the two leaves of this gate, through which every one must pass, who hopes to be admitted into the New Jerusalem. And, although David seems to make this gate very large, when he tells us, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad* ; Psal. cxix. 96. yet that is only to be understood concerning the authority of its injunctions, not of the liberty of its indulgence. It is exceeding broad, in the extent of its preceptive power ; for it prescribes rules to all our thoughts, words, and actions, and to every circumstance of each : but it is exceeding narrow and strait in the scope and allowance that it gives us ; so that, as soon may *a camel go through the eye of a needle*, as we pass through this gate with the burden of one unmortified lust or of one unrepented sin.

Quest. “ But why is it said, that those, *that do God’s commandments* may enter through the gates into the city ? Can any enter in as a thief, or a robber, over the wall ? Or can any, as an enemy, scale those eternal ramparts, and take it by invasion ? ”

I answer : This is so expressed, to denote the free access and admission of those into heaven, who are careful to obey the commandments of God upon earth. Such as these are free-born citizens of heaven : their whole estate, their whole traffic, all their treasure and livelihood is laid up there : they are free denizens, by the charter of the New Covenant : they may challenge ingress as their right and due : and he, who *hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. opens the door to these ; and lets them into those eternal mansions, which he hath purchased and prepared for them.

iv. The fourth and last query concerns that RIGHT, WHICH OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S COMMANDS GIVES US UNTO THIS TREE OF LIFE, AND TO THIS HEAVENLY CITY ; that is, to eternal life and glory.

Now, here, I shall branch out this query into Two : and so I shall shew you,

What that Obedience is, which gives us a right to heaven.

What that Right is, which this obedience doth confirm.

1. What that *Obedience* is, which gives us a right to heaven.

(1) I answer: It is not a Legal Obedience, or a perfect personal righteousness, which now gives us this right to heaven.

This is very plain: because, to constitute this, it is necessary that there be both original purity in our nature, which since the Fall is miserably vitiated and corrupted; and also a sinless perfection in our lives, in the constant observation of every iota of the Law, both as to its extension and intention, that we obey it in every part and tittle of it, and that our obedience unto every part be raised to the highest degree of love, zeal, and charity. This title was once good, but it is now lost, by the Fall, in the common ruin and rubbish of mankind; and he, who hath not another title, upon better and easier terms, will find cherubims and the flaming sword of divine justice set to guard the Tree of Life from his approaches, as once they did from guilty Adam.

(2) There is, therefore, another obedience which gives a right unto the Tree of Life: and that is an Evangelical Obedience; which, according to the grace, condescension, and equity of the Gospel, shall be accepted unto and rewarded with everlasting happiness.

Now this evangelical obedience consists, not indeed in innocency and perfection, but in sincere desires, and proportionable endeavours after it; when we strive to the utmost to live holily, and to walk more strictly with God, according to the rules which he hath prescribed us in his Holy Word.

And it consists of Two parts: mortification of our corrupt and sinful affections, whereby we die daily unto sin; and the spiritual renovation and quickening of our graces, whereby we increase daily in spiritual strength, and make farther progresses in holiness and true piety.

And, as it consists of these two parts, so hath it also these Two adjuncts. The one is, true Repentance for our past sins; reflecting upon them with shame and hatred; confessing and bewailing them with sorrow and contrition; and endeavouring, with all earnestness and sincerity, to abstain from the commission of the like for the future. The other is, a true and lively Faith, whereby we rely on the blood and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, for the remission of our sins; and upon his perfect

righteousness and prevalent intercession, for the acceptation and reward of our imperfect obedience.

Whosoever doth thus sincerely do the commandments of God, universally and constantly, with his whole strength and mind, as though he expected to be saved by the merits of his own works; and yet, after all, doth so entirely rely on the merits of Jesus Christ for salvation, as though he had never done any thing: he it is, and he alone, who hath this *right unto the Tree of Life*, and shall *enter through the gates into the heavenly city*: for he doth his commandments out of a sincere love; and God, who is love, will own his sincerity.

2. I come now to consider what that *Right* is, *which this evangelical obedience, or doing the commands of the Law according to the favour and mercy of the Gospel, doth confer upon us, by virtue of which we may assuredly expect eternal life.*

And here,

(1) It cannot be a Right of Purchase or Merit.

It is a foolish presumption and intolerable arrogance, to think we can deserve any thing at the hands of God, unless it be his wrath by our sins.

For,

[1]. In all proper merit there must be an equivalence, or at least a proportion of worth, between the work and the reward.

Which to imagine between our obedience and the heavenly glory, is, to exalt the one infinitely too high, and to abase the other infinitely too low. What proportion is there between a *cup of cold water given to a disciple of Christ*; and that ocean of everlasting joy and pleasure, which shall be the reward of it? A man might more reasonably expect to buy stars with counters, or to purchase a kingdom with two mites, than think to purchase the heavenly kingdom by paying down his duties and good works, which are no way profitable unto God, (For *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it any gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?* Job xxii. 3) and bear no more proportion to the infinite glory of heaven, than a single cypher doth to the numberless sands of the sea.

[2] The very grace, which enables us to do the commandments of God, is freely bestowed upon us by himself: and therefore the obedience, which we perform unto him, merely by his own assistance, cannot be said, without a grand impropriety, to merit any reward from him.

Such kind of merit is but an idle and frivolous pretence : for, certainly, he, who gives me money to buy an estate of him, doth as freely give me that estate, as if I had never bought it of him, but he had immediately bestowed the land upon me, and not the sum of money.

[3] All our obedience is imperfect ; and, therefore, if it deserve any thing, it is only punishment for the defects and failures of it.

This coin is not current : this metal is base and adulterated ; the king's stamp defaced and obliterated ; the edges clipped ; and the superscription, which should be on both sides *Holiness unto the Lord*, is on the reverse, at least, “ a sacrifice to hypocrisy, formality, and vain-glory :” and therefore this counterfeit and base alloy will not pass for purchase-money ; and had it what it deserves, it would be melted down in the furnace of hell.

[4] Suppose it were perfect, which it is not, yet it is no more than our bounden duty ; and duty can never be meritorious.

We are bound, by the law of nature, and as we are creatures who have received our beings and the continuance and preservation of them from God, to employ ourselves faithfully and assiduously in his service : and if, for our greater encouragement therein, he hath promised and will bestow upon us a vast and unconceivable reward, we must attribute it wholly to the supererogation of his free bounty ; for, without this, all our services were due to him before. Thus our Saviour tells us, Luke xvii. 9, 10. *Doth the master thank the servant, because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say (not in a complimentary way, but with truth and sincerity), We are unprofitable servants : we have but done that, which was our duty to do.* And therefore, certainly, if we cannot deserve thanks, much less can we deserve so ample a reward as eternal life : and therefore those, who think to purchase heaven and eternal life by doing that, which is not commanded nor their duty, will find a fearful disappointment of their presumptuous hopes, when they shall hear that sad greeting, *Who hath required these things at your hands ?*

This right then of merit and purchase is excluded ; and no man can have a right to heaven, upon the account of the worth and value of his works.

(2) There is, therefore, a Threefold Right, which they, that do the commandments of God, have to heaven and eternal happiness.

They have a Right of Evidence.

They have a Right of Inheritance.

They have a Right of Promise.

[1] Obedience to God's commandments gives us a Right of Evidence to Eternal Life.

He is judged to have the best right to an estate, who can produce the best evidence for it. Now the best evidence, that can be shewn for heaven, is our unfeigned obedience: all other things, which men may rely upon to justify their title, will prove but forged deeds, to which only the spirit of presumption or enthusiasm hath set his seal, and not the Spirit of God; and therefore we find how miserably the confidence of those wretches was dismounted, and their hopes frustrated, who came with *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?* Matt. vii. 22. All this may be, and yet be no good title, no good evidence for heaven: for if those, who cast out devils, have not cast out their lusts; if those, who prophesy in his name, by their sins dishonour and blaspheme that name; if those, who are workers of miracles, are yet workers of iniquity; he professeth against them that he knows them not, and commands them to depart from him for ever as *workers of iniquity*; Matth. vii. 22, 23: whereas, on the contrary, we find a joyful and blessed sentence pronounced upon others, according to the evidence brought in for them by their good works. So our Lord himself tells us, Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you..... for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me.....sick.....and in prison, and ye visited me.* This particle *for* is not a note of causalty or merit, but only of evidence: for, as evidences prove our right to our possessions, so likewise our obedience and good works do effectually prove the right which we have to eternal life, through Christ's purchase and God's free donation; and, therefore, the evidence being clear, the sentence must in equity proceed accordingly. God, as a just and righteous Judge, instates them in the possession of the kingdom of heaven, because they visited, and relieved, and

cherished his Son in his members. Not that their love to him, or their charity to them purchased any such right; but only proves and evinces it: it is not the cause of their justification, but a reason why God declares them justified; as the deeds, which I produce, are the reason why an estate is adjudged mine, though the cause of my title to it be either my own purchase or another's gift. As, therefore, those are said to have no right nor title to what they pretend, who can shew no evidence for it; so those, who obey not the holy will and commands of God, have no right to the Tree of Life, because they have no evidence to shew, nor no plea to urge for it, but will certainly be cast in their suit.

[2] Those, who do God's commandments, have a Right of Heirship and Inheritance unto eternal life.

For they are born of God, and therefore heaven is their patrimony, their paternal estate: for so are the words of the Apostle, 1 John ii. 29. *Every one, that doeth righteousness, is born of God.* And, if they are born of God, then, according to the Apostle's argumentation, Rom. viii. 17. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is the heir of all things.* The trial of thy legitimation, whether thou art a true and genuine Son of God, will lie upon thy obedience to his commands: for, *In this*, says the Apostle, 1 John iii. 9, 10. *the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.....and whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.* Now if, by our obedience and dutifulness, it appears, that we are indeed the children of God, our Father will certainly give us a child's portion; and that is no less than a kingdom. So saith our Saviour, Luke xii. 32. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

[3] Those, who do God's commandments, have a Right to eternal life by Promise and Stipulation; and therefore it is called *eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised: Tit. i. 2.

Indeed, the whole tenour of the Gospel is nothing else but the exhibition of this promise, and a comment upon it. This is the sum of the Gospel, the terms of the covenant, the indenture made between God and man: *If thou wilt enter into life*, says our Saviour, *keep the commandments*: Matth. xix. 17. And, in another place, our Lord tells us, *Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;*

but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven:
Matth. vii. 21.

And thus you see what Right it is, which obedience to the commands of God gives us to eternal life: a Right of Evidence, a Right of Heirship, and a Right of Promise.

“But,” may some say, “is not this again to establish the antiquated Covenant of Works, *Do this, and live?* And doth not this abolish the law of faith, *He that believeth shall be saved?* Is it not the office of faith alone, to convey unto us a right and title unto eternal life?”

I answer, No; it doth no prejudice unto faith: for we still affirm, that our original and fundamental right to heaven is grounded, not upon our obedience, but Christ's; not upon our works, but upon his; his merits and purchase, which, through faith, are imparted and imputed to us. Yet, give me leave to say, that I think the notion of justifying and saving faith is very much, if not generally mistaken by us: and, as the soul is the most noble and most vital principle of man, and yet is most unknown to him, what it is and how it operates; so faith, which is the vital principle of Christians, and by which the just are said to live, is yet most unknown, both as to its nature and operations, unto the generality of them. Some place it in assurance; some, in affiance and recumbence: some, in one act of faith; and some, in another: which are either the effects of faith as true, or the degrees of it as strong, rather than the proper and adequate nature and essence of it. And then they mightily puzzle themselves, how to accord and reconcile faith and obedience in carrying on the great work of our salvation, which yet were never at a variance about it, but only in their mistaken hypothesis. For what is faith, but an assent to a testimony? the very force and import of the word can carry no other sense: and he, who says he believes, must needs mean that he believes some record or testimony; or else he speaks that, which neither himself, nor any other can understand. Consequently, therefore, a divine faith must be an assent to a divine testimony; that is, to the Word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures. But if this faith rest only in a bare and naked assent to the truth of divine revelation, it is but historical and dogmatical; which, though it be a divine faith in respect of the objects believed, yet is but human and natural in respect of its principles and motives. But when this assent to the truths of the Scripture is joined with proportionable affections to those

truths, and doth excite us to actions conformable to the discoveries of the divine will, there this faith is justifying and saving. And, certainly, this is not so very distant from obedience, as to be thought hardly reconcilable with it. As, for instance: a man may give a bare assent to this great gospel-truth, that Jesus Christ *came into the world to save sinners*, and yet this faith may not save him; because it may be unoperative, and pass no farther than the act of the understanding: this is a dead faith, which can never bring any man to heaven; yea, such a faith as the very devils and damned spirits in hell have, who believe and tremble: James ii. 19. Another man believes the same truth, and assents to the same proposition; but this his assent influences his affections, and governs his actions, in conformity to the nature and consequences of such a belief: and, because he is assured that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Saviour of it, therefore he loves him, trusts in him, relies upon him, hopes in his promises, and obeys his commands. And this, indeed, is a true saving, justifying faith: for saving faith is a firm assent unto the truths of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures, working in us proportionable affections and actions: he, who so believes the glory of heaven, as to have his endeavours thereby quickened to use his utmost diligence for the obtaining of it; he, who so believes the torments of hell, as thereby to be terrified from doing any thing that might expose him to so great and fearful a condemnation; he, who so believes the attributes of God, as thereby to be excited to fear him for his greatness, to love him for his goodness, to imitate him in his bounty, purity, and holiness; he, who so believes the all-sufficiency, merits, and mediatory office of Jesus Christ, as thereby to be engaged with all his soul to love him, to trust in him, to rely upon him alone for salvation, and to yield to him all sincere obedience, as the law requires: such an one's faith is saving and justifying. So that, you see, there is no such discord between Faith and Works, as some would imagine: for that faith, which saves us, must work *by love*; Gal. v. 6. and those works, which capacitate us for salvation, must be *the obedience of faith*: as it is called, Rom. xvi. 26.

III. Now, what is the END of all this, but to press you to true practical holiness, and a strict obedience to the commandments of God?

If I should go from one person to another, and ask you one

by one, "Do you hope to be saved?" where is the man, who would not testify the confidence of his hopes, by his disdain at the question? Yea, but remember that salvation is a litigious claim: and you have a powerful adversary, who puts in a strong plea against you; even the justice of God and his eternal wrath and vengeance; whose title to us, were it but better weighed and considered, would woefully stagger the hopes of most men, and make their faces gather blackness, and smite their hearts with amazement, and their knees with trembling.

In a matter of such infinite importance, it highly concerns us to examine our right and title, and to peruse and try our evidences; lest, at the day of trial, we be cast in our suit, and pay dreadful damages unto the justice of God.

Only those, who do God's commandments, have this Right to the Tree of Life. Christ hath, indeed, purchased salvation for all; but he is *the author of....salvation* only to those who *obey him*, as the author to the Hebrews speaks; Heb. v. 9. and, without holiness *no man shall ever see the Lord*; Heb. xii. 14. The inheritance is, indeed, purchased; but where are your evidences of your heirship? Sirs, flatter not yourselves with any vain conceits of the mercy of the Gospel, in prejudice to the authority of the Law: the Commandments are the Statute-Law of God's kingdom: the Gospel is his Court of Chancery: but neither justice nor equity will relieve those, who have not done their utmost to observe his statute-law; and therefore those, who indulge themselves in their sloth, and wilful neglect both of what they ought to do and might have done, do but deceive their souls with vain hopes: they have no right to the eternal inheritance; but their portion must for ever be, with dogs and swine, without the holy city, into which no unclean thing shall ever enter. And if any think this Legal Preaching, let mine ever be so.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

F U N E R A L

OF THE

HON. ALGERNON GREVILL, ESQ.

SECOND BROTHER TO THE

R I G H T H O N. R O B E R T L O R D B R O O K, &c.

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE, JULY 21, AT MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXON, AND WAS
BURIED AT WARWICK, AUG. 6, 1662.

2-14-18

1818

HON. ALGERNON GREVILLE ESQ.

RIGHT LORD ROSSLYN AND BLOOM

who departed this life at 11 o'clock on the 14th inst.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE LADY KATHARINE BROOK.

MADAM:

THE desire of your Dying Son brought me into the pulpit, and now your Ladyship's commands into the press. I could heartily wish that the tender of my obedience in this address, might not make one among your too many sad remembrancers; nor give you cause to lament him as well in the press, as in the grave; as here propounded, a pattern for our life, as well as made by God an example of our death. But, Madam, when you have wept over this dear loss in all the forms so great a sorrow as yours could represent, this small piece will, I fear, prove so unhappy, as to give you his memory in a new shape, and thereby lay a new scene for grief.

The necessity and usefulness of this subject of mortality are, I am confident, sufficient to recommend it to your acceptance; and if any thing make it unwelcome, it must be that which gives you too great a title to it, the nearness of the instance: an instance so near, that seems like the smiting of one half, to bid the other prepare.

The loss is confessedly great; vast as our hopes, and general as our sorrows. Indeed, to look upon moderate losses through tears, is as ill a way to make a right judgment of them, as it is to take the dimensions of objects through water, which always reflects them greater or nearer than in truth they are. But yours, Madam, is so truly extraordinary, and of such public concernment, that it must needs fall below its just estimate, if it be not judged through more than your own tears and grief. The Church and State join with you, and each of them deplores as a loss at present, whatsoever so great virtues and endowments as his prompted them to expect hereafter. The right eye of the kingdom runs down with tears. All, who knew him, and

had the honour and happiness of so great an example, pay down that tribute in sorrow, to his memory, which they owed of love and service to his person.

But, Madam, it is in vain to nourish sad thoughts, by conjecturing to what height he might have attained, if years had not been wanting to his merits: for, though his flourishing hopes gave earnest of somewhat most excellent and perfect, yet hath he now far outstripped even those hopes; and, instead of a great man on earth, is become a glorious saint in heaven: and, certainly, we have no just cause to quarrel the Divine Providence, for not taking our method to advance him.

That God would preserve your Noble Sons yet remaining, and lengthen out their lives to fill up their deceased brother's hopes, and their own too, that you may find no other miss, but in number; that God would sanctify this heavy stroke both to you and them, and fit you for that last, which alone can come nearer, is the prayer of,

Madam,

Your Ladyship's most humble

and obedient servant,

EZEKIEL HOPKINS.

Hackney, Oct. 4, 1662.

A

FUNERAL SERMON.

ECCL. ix. 5.

FOR THE LIVING KNOW THAT THEY SHALL DIE.

LIFE, whether an active spark struck out from the meeting of soul and body together, or whatsoever sprightful and busy thing else it be, is the highest perfection of corporeal beings, because the nearest resemblance of the divine. The variety of its motions, the multiplicity of its functions, the secret conveyance of its influences through those hidden channels of the organs into the several parts of the body, give it a preeminence above all that the inanimate greatness or lustre of other things can attain unto.

Upon this very account, philosophy teacheth us, that the least fly, though it be nothing but dust animated by the sun, is yet of greater excellency than the sun itself; and Sampson's bees, than the lion which bred them. These slight and contemptible creatures, which serve for little else than to shew the world in how small a room God can enclose the springs and engines of such various motions, have yet a perfection beyond all the large volumes of the heavens, and the light and duration of all the stars in them.

Upon these principles, Solomon, making a comparison, in the verse immediately preceding the text, between lifeless and living things, prefers the meanest of these before the best and noblest of the other: *a living dog is better than a dead lion.*

Though this be true of all creatures in general, yet the accommodation of it is here more particularly intended unto man; and the design of the Spirit of God is, to shew that life hath a vast prerogative above death. One would think it strange, that there should need so much solemnity, such a train of prepara-

tives, reasons, and similitudes, to usher in a conclusion so obvious and undoubted as this is, that it is better to live than to die.

And, yet, if we observe it, the method of the Holy Ghost is much stronger, in confirming so plain a thesis by an abstruse argument. The argument we have in the text: *For the living know that they shall die*: because we know that we must die, therefore it is better to live. This might seem a somewhat harsh kind of argumentation, were it not, that, as to die is the last period; so to die well and breathe out a holy soul into the arms of a merciful God, is the greatest end of life: this advantage have the living. The dead can die no more; for *It is appointed unto men once to die*: Heb. ix. 27. nor, if they err in this, can they ever recal or amend it. This is that warfare*, as the Wise Man calls it, in which we cannot twice mistake. But it is the privilege of the living, that, knowing the frailty of their lives and the certainty of their dissolution, they may, by repentance and holiness, so prepare themselves for death as to make it only a happy transition from a temporal to an eternal life, and an inlet into endless bliss and joy. So that if we briefly gather up the sum and force of the reason, we may find that it lies thus: it is better to live than to die, because *the living know that they shall die*; and the knowledge and expectation of our death is the most likely means to engage us to live in such constant holiness and preparation, as that after death we may live in eternal glory and happiness.

The words, though they are thus obscure in their coherence, yet, in themselves and their own proper and genuine sense, are very clear and perspicuous. They contain in them the judgment, which the living pass upon their own mortality; and, as they lie before us, cannot be so much as suspected of any difficulty.

I shall, therefore, waving all other enquiries, make only these two.

Whence it is, that the living attain the sure and infallible knowledge of their own death.

Whence it proceeds, that, though all men generally know that they shall die, yet so few do seriously and in good earnest prepare themselves for it.

I. To the FIRST, I answer:

* Eccl. viii. 8.

i. There be MANY THINGS, FROM WHENCE WE MAY COLLECT THE NECESSITY OF DYING.

I shall pretermitt divers, and only speak to these following.

1. We may collect it, *by those harbingers and forerunners of death, diseases, pains, and natural decays, which are incident to all men.*

Man is compounded of the contrary and jarring qualities of heat and cold, drought and moisture; which are always waging an intestine war within him. Health is the equal balance of these contrarities; when they are so tempered together, the more active with the more resisting, that neither of them can get the victory over the other. And therefore some suppose, that Adam, who doubtless was created in the highest perfection of natural health and strength, had all these mixed *ad pondus*, in so even a temper, that none of them could naturally sway him to corruption; and that God then inflicted the death he threatened, when, upon the first transgression, he turned the evenness of his constitution, and thereby brought him into a mortal state. Sickness is nothing else, but a predominant faction in a man's temper, which, as rebellions use to do, raiseth itself upon the ruin of the whole. As God slackens the reins to some quality in the greater world, when he intends to bring a general calamity and destruction upon it (for thus we read, that he once destroyed the world by a dropsy, in the great deluge; and that he will again destroy it by a fever, in the last conflagration) so likewise in man, who is the lesser world, God doth sometimes let loose the reins, and gives some of his natural qualities an unnatural predominancy: and either floods him with dropsies; or burns him with fevers; or numbs him with palsies, lethargies, and epilepsies; and, by other innumerable diseases, so ravageth his health and vigour, his youth and beauty, that he becomes a ghost, before yet he be a corpse. Yea, those, who have had no such violent assaults as these, yet find their decays grow up together with their years: Solomon hath given us an elegant description of them, Eccl. xii. from the second to the seventh verse: dimness of sight, deafness of hearing, weakness and trembling of limbs, sluggishness of spirits, chillness of blood, loss of appetite and desire; and a whole hospital of other incurable diseases are the attendants of old age, which is itself the most incurable of all; that the very length of living, may be argument enough of the necessity of dying. This is that heavy burden, which bows down all on whom it lies; which

makes them go stooping to the ground, as if it would bid them contemplate what they are, in the dust, and consider their mortality in that earth into which they must shortly fall. All these are as so many harbingers of death, sent before to bid us prepare, for that the king of terrors cannot be long after.

2. *The observation of death's universal empire over all other things, and over all other men*, may give us a certain knowledge that we also must shortly die.

If we consider the vicissitudes of natural things, we shall find that death reigns in all of them. The day dies into night, summer into winter: time itself, which destroys all things, yet dies continually, nor can it exist one minute together. Our very life is nothing else but a succession of dying: every day and hour wears away part of it; and, so far as it is already spent, so far are we already dead and buried: so that the longest liver hath no more, but that he is longer a dying than others. This, indeed, is only to die successively; but that fatal and final stroke is coming, when we shall no more live nor die. All others have felt it, and therefore David calls death *the way of all the earth*: 1 Kings ii. 2. We need no other proof of this, than to search into the records of the grave: there lie the rich and poor, the noble and ignoble, the wise and foolish, the holy and profane, the rubbish of a thousand generations heaped one upon another; and this truth, that all must die, is written indelibly even in their dust. The whole world is but a great charnel-house: our very graves were once living: we dig through our forefathers, and must shortly become earth ourselves, to bury our posterity: so thick sown are the carcasses of all the ages since the creation, as were enough to dung the whole face of the earth with their flesh, and pave it with their bones. Are not we of the same mould with them? hath not God's hand kneaded us out of the same clay, and may not his finger crumble us into the same dust? certainly, the cords of our earthly tabernacle may be as easily unloosed, or cut asunder, as theirs. We read but of two only of all mankind exempted, by a peculiar grace and privilege, from this law of death; and they were Enoch and Elias: God strangely tacked their temporal and eternal life together; and made their time flow into eternity, without any stop or interruption; like rivers, which glide along into the sea with a free and undisturbed course, while ours must first sink and find a passage under ground.

3. We may certainly know ourselves mortal, *by knowing ourselves sinful creatures.*

There is a double necessity of death upon the account of sin.

As a Punishment.

As a Purgation of it.

(1) It is necessary, as a Punishment of sin; that that primitive threatening might be fulfilled; Gen. ii. 17. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

Hereby the justice of God stands engaged to inflict death upon every transgressor: and to this it is, that the Apostle ascribes it: Rom. v. 12. *By sin death entered into the world, and death passed upon all men, because that all have sinned.* Death therefore is not so much a debt due to nature, as to the avenging justice of God; and befalls us rather by his ordination and appointment, than by any natural necessity. *It is appointed unto men once to die:* Heb. ix. 27. and this appears, in that man was at first created in pure nature, yet in a deathless state. It is true, that Adam, even before he fell, had in him the contemperation of the same contrary qualities as now we have; and so, at least, had also the remote principles of death and dissolution: but, probably, either these were so harmoniously mixed, as that there was no tendency to a dissolution; or else he was created with such a privilege, that, by eating of the Tree of Life, or by the command of his own will to which all his inferior faculties were then perfectly subject, he might sway and overrule the jars and discords of an elemental constitution, and continue himself in life, so long as he should continue himself in obedience. So, then, it is not primarily man's nature, but man's sin, and the curse of the Law taking hold upon him, that hath brought in this necessity of dying. But yet the justice of God doth not inflict it as a punishment upon all; for death, under the strict notion of a punishment, is proper only to wicked men and unbelievers, who are left to bear the curse of the Law in their own persons, and to satisfy offended justice in their own sufferings: as to believers, Christ hath undertaken and eluctated for them all that was penal: he hath borne the whole curse of the law, *being made a curse for us:* Gal. iii. 13.

(2) So that now, to those, who believe, it is no more a punishment, but only a Purgation.

And, were it not that God hath thus altered the quality of it, making it the greatest means of sanctification in the world, thereby turning that which was a curse into a blessing, it might

probably be maintained, that faith in the death of Christ would supercede all necessity of dying, and make us not only righteous but immortal. But God hath other ends in the inflicting of death, besides the satisfaction of his justice: he makes use of it for the purging of his people from the relics of their corruption; and it is the only Purgatory, which they must ever undergo. Sin hath taken a lease of our souls, and holds them by our own lives: it will be in us to the last gasp; and, as the heart is the last which dies, so is that corruption which lodgeth in it: but, then, die it must: God hath so graciously ordered it, that, though death came into the world by sin, yet sin itself shall be abolished out of it by death. And, as sea-water loseth its brackishness when percolated through the earth, and becomes sweet and wholesome; so a Christian, when he is strained through the grave, loseth all his brackishness, all his dregs and scum, and becomes pure and holy, fit for the enjoyment of a pure and holy God. This is his final victory: this is the deciding stroke between him and all his spiritual enemies: when he hath been long struggling, with too little success, against sin and Satan; and is ready to faint and despond, in the conflict; death comes in, sent as an auxiliary from God, and gives him both the day and the triumph: certainly, he cannot but count it a good office done him, to have his earthly house pulled down upon so many of his uncircumcised foes, though it crush him too in the fall. Thus hath God brought over death, which was before a formidable enemy, to be of a believer's party: so that, though it had its sting and strength, its very being from sin; yet it proves the most effectual means for the destruction of sin. As worms, when they creep into their holes, leave a slimy dirt about them; so is it with a Christian: when he dies, he leaves his sin, his filth and corruption, all at the grave's mouth: there he leaves them; and his soul, got free from that clog, mounts up into a blessed eternity, where it is for ever fixed and perfected in holiness, where there is no object to tempt, nor corruption to betray: no steam of any lust shall there rise to cloud our beatifical vision of God, such as do here too oft darken the eye both of our reason and our faith: we shall no more cast kind glances upon our sins, nor no more know a wavering and hovering desire after them. O blessed necessity! when the soul shall be for ever tied up to one all-satisfying good! when it shall, with as natural a proneness and vehement ardour, love and delight in God, as it loves itself, and delights in its own happi-

ness! And why then should we desire to linger here below, and to spin out a miserable life, whereof sin and sorrow will still have the greatest share? Here, the best of us are engaged in perpetual quarrels between sin and grace: the one will not yield, and the other cannot: corruption compels one way, and grace commands another. Haste, therefore, O Christian! out of this scuffle: make haste to heaven, and there this controversy shall be for ever decided. There, we shall no more live in fear of new sins, nor in sorrow for old; but all sorrow and sighing shall cease: all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and all sin rooted out of our hearts. And, upon this account, death is necessary.

ii. Now though, by these and other such like considerations, we may arrive at a certain knowledge that we shall die; yet THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TIME AND MANNER OF OUR DEATH ARE KNOWN TO GOD ONLY.

Some have, a little before their decease, given secret presages of these things, as I am informed this Honourable Person did. Whence these proceed, it will not be necessary here to enquire. Possibly, they may be only fortuitous and casual: the event may make those things pass for predictions, which were only spoken at random. Or, if they seem too punctual to be such, the best account, which I can give, is this: that death, being about to unloose those secret and sweet bands, those vital knots which tie our souls and bodies together, we begin to grow more unconfined in our knowledge, as well as our being; and receive intelligences of things after another way, than by the dull conveyance of sense. There is now, that dust and ashes in the eye of the soul, which hinders it from discovering futurities: but, when death is blowing this away, it begins to know after its own manner; and receives at least some obscure and glimmering hints of those objects, which sense could never administer. And hence, possibly, may proceed those strange prophetic speeches, which many have given out concerning their own death. But, whencesoever they are, God doth ordinarily reserve the exact knowledge of these things to himself.

1. He only knows the critical and punctual *Time of our Death*; for he hath determined it, to a very moment.

It is God, who turns up our glass; who puts such a measure of sand into it, and no more; and hath prefixed that it shall run such a time, and no longer. It is he, who hath written our names upon so many days and hours as we shall live, as upon so

many leaves of his book ; and it is impossible for us to turn over that day or hour, which hath not our names written upon it, from all eternity. Now this Book of Life God hath written in a hand, which is not legible by us : we know not the tale of days that he hath appointed us ; but this we know, that we shall fulfil, and cannot exceed them : he hath set us our bounds of living, beyond which we cannot pass : the infant, which dies as soon as it seeth the light, hath filled up its appointed time ; as well as he, who lives to decrepit age. And, therefore, though God be said, in Scripture, to cut off some men in the midst of their days ; this must not be so understood, as if there were remaining in all the store of time any days that were due to them : but only it denotes, either that God cuts them off in the full strength and vigour of their years, when they might, according to human probability, have lived much longer ; or else, comparing the shortness of their life with the length of others, God seems to break it off in the middle before he had finished it. Indeed, most men do themselves shorten their own lives : some, by intemperance, are still shaking their glass to make it run the faster ; and others break it at once, by violence ; yet all live as long as God had decreed, though not so long as was their duty. I shall not farther dispute whether the term of life be fixed or moveable : Job, methinks, hath clearly stated and determined the question, Job vii. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth ? are not his days also like the days of a hireling ?* a hireling hath his days of prefixed service ; and, when they are expired, he is discharged from his labour : so Job xiv. 5. *His days are determined : the number of his months are with thee : thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* It is true, however, though God hath thus numbered out our days, yet there are means proper to prolong our lives beyond the term that God hath fixed in his decree, and such as would prove available if applied : whoever dies might have lived longer, had the right means been used : as Martha said to Christ, John xi. 21. *Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died ;* so we may say, if such means and remedies had been applied, death might have been prevented : but, withal, we must observe, that that God, who hath prefixed to every one his term of life, hath likewise ordained, in his own counsel and purpose, that those means, which are proper to prolong it beyond that term, shall, through some unavoidable mistake or mishap, either not be known or not used. This may be a support unto us, against

fears of our own, and grief for the death of others: all our times are in God's hands: he measures out every day to us; and, as he hath appointed the bounds over which we shall not pass, so he hath appointed that we shall certainly reach them. His providence disposeth of the meanest and smallest concerns of man's life, and therefore much more of life itself: and if a hair of our heads cannot, much less then shall we ourselves fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father.

2. As we know not the time, so neither the particular *Manner of our Death*, whether it shall be sudden, or foreseen; by disease, or casualty: whether the thread of life shall be snapped in pieces by some unexpected accident, or worn and fretted away by some lingering consumption, or burnt asunder by some fiery fever.

In what manner and shape our death will appear to us, we know not: this is a secret of God's own breast. But, whatever the shape be, if we endeavour by a holy life to prepare ourselves for it, it shall not be frightful nor terrible to us.

But, truly, the generality of the world are as little careful to prepare for their death, as if they were privileged persons, and had a protection given them from that arrest. Though they see thousands fall before them, though death mows down their friends and relations round about them; yet they live as secure and confident, as if they were not at all concerned in those examples, and as if God's hand cut off others only to make the more room for them in the world. Who is there so fool-hardy, that, standing near the mark of an archer, and seeing one arrow fly over his head, another light at his feet; one glance by his right, another by his left-hand; will not at length bethink himself of his danger, that by the very next he also may be shot and slain? Man is this mark, at which death is continually shooting: sometimes the arrow flies over our heads; and slays some great person, our superior: sometimes it lights at our feet; when it kills a child or servant, or those who are our inferiors: sometimes it passeth by our left-hand; and kills an enemy, at whose death possibly we rejoice; and, anon, it strikes the friend of our right-hand. Though we see all this, though we see our friends and foes, those of all states and ages, drop down dead round about us; yet are we still as frolic and careless, as if this nothing at all concerned us: whereas, possibly, the very next arrow may strike us through the heart, dead upon the place. It is a strange

and brutish sottishness, that so many spectacles of mortality cannot move.

We read * of that victorious emperor Charles the Vth. that, to engrave the deeper apprehensions of his death, he caused his own funerals to be solemnized, while he was yet living: he laid himself down in his tomb, and had that rare fate of great persons, to be lamented with true tears; at least his own: *Hoc videlicet rudimento*, as the historian speaks, *Carolus vicinæ jam morti proludebat*. If it were any help to prepare him to die, at last, really, by dying thus first in emblem, we may almost daily have the same. It will be no great mistake, to account every funeral we attend on, to be our own. Let us imagine ourselves nailed up in the coffin, laid in the grave, covered over with earth, and putrifying to worms and dirt: this is only but a few days to anticipate what shall be. Not a grave opens its mouth, but it plainly speaks thus much, that we are mortal and perishing: not a rotten bone nor dead scull is scattered about it, but it tells us we must shortly take up our abode with them in the same darkness and corruption. And if, upon every such sad occasion, we make not particular application of it to ourselves, we not only lose our friends' lives, but their very deaths too. Yet, herein, are we generally faulty: when God snatcheth them from us, we usually reflect more upon the loss, than the example; and thereby, as he deprives us of the comfort which we had in their lives, so we deprive ourselves of the instruction and benefit which we might have by their deaths.

There are indeed few, unless it be those who have quite divested themselves of humanity, but will sometimes consider their frail and mortal state; at least, when they see a pattern of it before their eyes: when they see departing pangs, distorted eyes, quivering limbs, the wan and ghastly corpse, the image of death in all its lively terrors; if they have any remainders of natural softness left, it must needs strike them with pensiveness, to think that one day this must be their own case; shortly, all this must be acted over upon themselves. But, no sooner is the dead interred and the grave filled, than all these sage and serious thoughts vanish; and they return again to the same glut of lusts and pleasures as before.

* Strada Bel. Belg. lib. i.

II. Let us therefore consider, which was the **SECOND GENERAL** propounded, whence it proceeds, that men are so stupidly irrational, that, though they all know they shall die, yet so few seriously prepare themselves for it.

Perhaps, upon enquiry, we shall find the causes of it to lie in these following particulars.

i. **MEN ARE GENERALLY SO IMMERSED IN THE BUSINESSES AND PLEASURES OF LIFE, THAT THESE SWALLOW UP ALL SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DEATH, AND PREPARATIONS FOR IT.**

They are employed about other things: like a heap of ants, that are busily toiling to get in their provision, without regarding the foot that is ready to crush them. Such are the impertinent and vain cares of men!

One contrives how he may melt away his days in luxury and pleasure; how he may, by variety and choice of invented delights, imp the wings of time, and make the slow days and hours roll away faster over him. It is not likely these should entertain any sober thoughts of dying, who thus, like prodigals, lavish out their time, as if they could never see the bottom of it, and their stock could never be exhausted. The unconcerning vanities of visits and compliments divide their days; and the only use, which they make of their time, is, to study how they may pass it; till their end comes upon them unthought of, and sour death cuts them off in the midst of all their foolish pleasures.

Some are busily climbing up the steep ascent of honour and dignity; and are so wholly engaged in getting promotions and new titles, that they forget their old style of mortal creatures. They spend their lives in pursuing a puff of wind; an airy fantastic thing, depending merely upon the fond and irrational opinion of the giddy multitude. As counters, which as they are placed, stand for scores, or hundreds, or thousands; but are all of the same value, when huddled together: so, truly, the honours, which the ambitious and gallant spirits of the world do so passionately court, are as fictitious as these; depending merely upon common esteem. When death comes to shuffle and huddle the noble and ignoble together in the grave, what becomes of all the distance and difference that was between them? will the dust and ashes of the one make obeysance then, or pay respect to the dust and ashes of the other?

Others are plotting, with the fool, how they may grow rich, and lay up goods for many years; when yet they know not

whether God will not take away their souls this very night; and then what remains to them of all that, which they have scraped together? Such men, methinks, may be well compared to sumpter-horses: they are laden with a rich treasure, and attended with a numerous train of servants; but, at night, when their load is taken off, what remains to them of all their carriage, but only the stripes and weariness of the day?

Vain men! are these the great importing things, which you set your hearts upon? Must the world drink up all your thoughts; and death, that will shortly snatch you from all the enjoyments of it, be forgotten? Yet, so brutish are we become, that, though whatsoever we hold here be by the death of the former owners, yet we are apt to look upon ourselves as perpetual possessors; and never think that we must part with it to others, as others have done to us. The riches and honours, which are but the dust and smoke of this world, have so blinded our eyes, that we cannot discern the near approaches of death: and, thus, while we, Archimedes like, are busily drawing projects and designs in the dust, and are wholly intent about vainer speculations than his, we mind not the alarm, nor perceive the enemy is upon us, till we are stricken dead through the reins.

ii. MEN DELAY SERIOUS PREPARATIONS FOR DEATH, BECAUSE THEY GENERALLY LOOK UPON IT AS AFAR OFF.

Those, who are young, think they must of course live till they be aged; and the aged think that their decays are not so great and sudden, but that they may well weather out yet a few years more: the healthy think they need not prepare till they be summoned; and those, whom God doth summon by diseases and weaknesses, think that yet it is possible they may escape them. And, thus, though it may be God hath told us out but a few days or hours, yet we reckon very bountifully of years and ages; as if our times were not in his hands, but our own. Men would need no longer eternity, if God should defer his stroke till they thought themselves old enough to die: while their youth and spirits revel it, and their blood runs dancing through their veins, the thoughts of death are not come in season with them: it is as great a solecism to think of their graves, as of going to bed at noon-day: these cold and phlegmatic considerations are more fit for their declining years, and the winter of their lives; and they resolve that they will then think of dying, when they are choked up with coughs and catarrhs,

and can scarce see a death's head but through a pair of spectacles. But what becomes of these resolutions? when age hath snowed upon them, and frost-bitten all their former pleasures; yet, even then, they find the dalliances, which pass between their souls and bodies, so sweet, that they are very loth they should be broken off: and this prompts them to think (as we are apt to believe what we desire) that as yet they shall not: they hope they have some time more to live, and so drive their death from year to year before them; and never think of dying, so long as they have life enough left to think of any thing. This is the veriest dotage imaginable: for if it be true, what the naturalists affirm, that no grown person carrieth to the grave with him the same flesh which he brought into the world, that the revolution of a few years gradually wears away the former body and brings a new one in its stead; it is strangely gross, that they should think of living much longer, who have already outlived several generations of themselves; or that they should not at length prepare for death, who have already buried themselves, it may be eight or nine times over: diseases and natural decays have, for many years, laid close siege to them, routing their guards, battering the walls of their flesh, and forcing the soul to quit the outworks and retire into the heart; yet the mad desire of living makes them hope they shall hold out these ruins of life yet a while longer, though they see many hundred others, better manned and fortified than themselves, taken in upon the first assault.

We scarce so wretchedly mistake about any thing, as about old age.

For

1. *We reckon it a vast while thither.*

What a shew do threescore or fourscore years make, at a distance! How numerous do the days and hours appear! But those, who have attained to them, find that they all glide away insensibly from them, and hardly know they have lived so long, but that they have bought so many almanacks. Certainly, long life is like an evening mist; and seems far greater to us at a distance, than when we are in it. It is strange how the different situating of ourselves will mightily alter the prospect of our years: while we look forward upon them from youth, they all are represented to us long and happy; but when we look back upon them from age, they then appear to have been short and trouble-

some: a day to come, shews far longer to us than a year that is gone. It is high time for us, to mend our accounts; and to estimate the years that are to come, by those that are already past. Those thirty or forty years, which were judged by thee in thy childhood an unattainable age, how short do they seem now, when thou hast outlived them! What remains of them all, but that thou art grown bigger than thou wert; and hast the remembrance of some inconsiderable actions, which were done in that time? Why then should we think thirty or forty years yet to come, such a huge gulf as can never be waded through? Remembrance can, with one glance, review what is past; and why should hope and expectation look upon what is to come as boundless and infinite? Are all our winter days spent, and none but our summer in reserve? Are none remaining for us but the fairest and the longest? Surely both hemispheres of our lives have equal horizons; and we shall find, that our past and future years have but just the same measure.

2. Most men presume that they shall live to extreme age.

A vain confidence! as if God would turn the world into a hospital, and fill it with the old and decrepit. We have a proverb, that young men may, but old men must die? whereas observation will inform us, that incomparably fewer die old than young: and those, too, are so worn out with crazy and languishing distempers, so tired with following the funerals of their families, that they detest the age which they formerly desired, and execrate their grey hairs, made such as well by griefs as years. This world is God's nursery for eternity, and he will not cumber it with too many old trunks. Death lies every where in ambush for us. The Jews reckon up nine hundred and three diseases; but the casualties, to which we are subject, are certainly innumerable: a tile may brain us: a pestilential vapour out of the earth may stifle us: our houses may bury us under their ruins: our very meat and drink may choke us; and the means to preserve life may become the instruments of our death. We read of some, whom a fly or a grape-stone has dispatched; or who have died by plucking of a hair from their breasts, God turning a very hair into a spear to destroy them. Our souls may leak out at some small crack in those hidden pipes of life, the veins. It is a strange folly, that we, who are subject to such various diseases and accidents, should yet dream of dying of no other but old age. Did we but seriously con-

sider by what small pins this frame of man is held together, it would appear no less than a miracle to us, that we live one day or hour to an end.

3. *Men think a few of their latest days and thoughts are enough to prepare them for death.*

They account it extreme folly to lose the delights of life, by still jarring upon this ungrateful remembrance, that they must shortly die; and therefore delay it till those unwelcome monitors, age and grey-hairs, call loudly upon them; till they can read deep emblems of their graves in their hollow eyes and furrowed brows; and if something must be done for their souls, it shall be only a small courtesy at parting. Thus they devote the flower and spirit of their years to sin and pleasure; and think, when their time runs low, to put off God with the dregs of it, and content him with the Devil's refuse. Alas! the only thing worth living for, is, to die well: it is not to eat, or drink, or sleep, or sport, or talk: it is not to grow rich, or honourable; but to learn how we may, by a severe mortification, die first to the world, and then out of it. And is it not, (as Seneca speaks*), a shame, that thou shouldest destine to this great business of life, only those relics of thy time, which can be employed about nothing else? Is it never time to become new men, till you are ceasing to be; or to reform your lives, till you are ending them? Believe it, the vast concerns of your everlasting state require your freshest strength and spirits: it is not a dying sigh, which will waft your souls over into a blessed eternity: it is not to leave somewhat behind for pious uses; nor, at the last gasp, to recommend yourselves into God's hands, when you have been all your life long in the Devil's: it is not some chimney-prayer nor blanket-devotion, nor the name of God brought up in a cough, that will suffice: heaven were a cheap prize could it be so lazily obtained. No; repentance is quite another thing: it is to ransack the soul, to rend the heart, to demolish strong-holds, to rout those legions by which we are possessed: in a word, it is to take heaven by a holy force and violence. And what stupendous folly is it, to defer this great work, (a work, that will strain every nerve of your souls to perform it well) till the sluggishness and infirmities of old age

* *Non pudet te reliquias vitæ tibi reservare, et id solum tempus bonæ menti destinare quod in nullam rem conferri possit?* Sen. de Brev. Vitæ. cap. 4.

oppress you ! Think you, your souls can then vigorously bestir themselves, when they are grown stiff with age ; when your faculties are benumbed, and your spirits congealed past the thaw of a fire ? Are they then fit for action, when they lie wrapped about with tough and clammy phlegm, and buried under sloth and sleep ? Be persuaded, therefore, instantly to break off all delays, and from this very moment to provide in good earnest for your souls ; lest, as the blandishments of the flesh and the world make you now think it is too soon, so the sudden surprise of death, and the dreadful sight of a boundless eternity rushing in upon you, make you hereafter cry out, " It is too late, too late !"

iii. MEN GENERALLY PUT OFF SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DYING, BECAUSE OF THE TERRORS AND INSUPPORTABLE DREAD WHICH SUCH APPREHENSIONS BRING WITH THEM.

And therefore death is called by Job, ch. xviii. 14. *the king of terrors* ; a king, that comes attended with a thousand phantoms and frightful apparitions. Who can, without a shivering horror, think of the separation of those dear companions, the soul and body, of the debasement and dishonours of the grave ; that we must lie in a bed of stench and rottenness, under a coverlet of crawling worms, there mouldering away to dust in oblivion ? shortly, we shall be no more ourselves : we must change this substantial life ; a life, which is really felt, and hath real comforts in it : we must change it, to live only in the inscription of a tombstone, or the memory of a friend : our eyes must no more behold this dear and pleasant light : we must no more relish the delights of this world : all our fair-laid projects will be disappointed, and we in a moment snatched away from whatever we enjoyed or designed. Now these are too gloomy meditations for the jovial and frolic world : such melancholy thoughts of dying prove little less than executioners themselves, and leave death but half its work. Human nature abhors them : we find that Christ himself, in whom it was most pure and spotless, not gastered by any of those weak fears or fancies that pervert our reason ; yet even he, as man, recoils at that death, which, as God, he was assured to conquer : Luke xxii. 42.

The fullest assurance of heaven is scarce sufficient to disarm the terrors of death, or reconcile us to it. St. Paul, to whom God gave the unexampled sight of heaven, and discovered

the ineffable glories, light, and lustre of that blessed place, is yet troubled to think that the eternal possession of these can be no otherwise obtained than by dying. Loth he was to descend into heaven through the grave; and, having been once *caught up into paradise*, can scarce think of going thither any other way: 2 Cor. xii. 4. *We, that are in this tabernacle, saith he, do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; that mortality might be swallowed up of life:* 2 Cor. v. 4. Though his fleshly clothing, like theirs that travel in foul weather, become burdensome with mire and wet, with sin and tears; though he groan under the weighty pressure, and would be glad to be eased and cleansed at any rate: yet nature itself startles, when it sees the rude hand of death stretched out ready to undress him; and, rather than this garment should be taken off, would have it dipped in light and glory upon him.

Thus dreadful is death to us, as men; but, much more, as sinners. It is the guilt which deserves it, and the hell which follows it, that give death its most hideous shape. We are not so much affrighted at the grim and meagre looks of this officer, who is to arrest us, as at the ireful countenance of the Judge, who is to pass sentence upon us. It is not the unfelt rotting in the grave; or those worms, which must shortly feed upon their carcases: but the burning in hell; and the restless stings of that tormenting worm, which breeds in a putrid conscience. From these death receives its power and anguish. And therefore the Apostle tells us, that *the sting of death is sin*: 1 Cor. xv. 56. And, indeed, well may it be the sting of the first death, since it carries in it the venom and poison of the second. No wonder then, if those, who are conscious to themselves of guilt, dare not think of standing before the dreadful tribunal of God: they cannot bear the thoughts of eternal wrath and vengeance, to be for ever inflicted by the almighty power of an incensed God. No wonder at all, that they thrust far from them the thoughts of their dying day, because they presage, that that day, whensoever it comes, must needs be an evil day to them.

III. I shall add no more; but only make some APPLICATION of what hath been spoken.

USE i. If we all certainly know, that we must die, this might teach us so much wisdom, as NOT TO SET OUR AFFECTIONS EAGERLY

UPON ANY THING IN THIS PRESENT WORLD; a world, which we must shortly leave.

Death will, within a while, pluck us from it; and it will prove a violent rending to us, if our affections be inordinately glued unto it. Consider, that all things in this present world are but fading and perishing; but your precious souls are ever living and immortal. Be not unequally yoked: do not join an ever living soul to dying comforts. This were a tyranny, worse than that of Mezentius; who, as the poet tell us *, bound the living to dead carcases.

It was a perverse use, which the old heathens made of the necessity of dying, when, in their feasts, their custom was to bring in a skeleton to their guests; thereby exciting them to mirth and voluptuousness, while they could relish such delights, because shortly they must be as much dust and bones as what they saw. This is the common theme of Horace, Anacreon, and all the Epicurean Styte †. Like those, 1 Cor. xv. 32. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.*

How much better improvement doth the Apostle make of it, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31! *The time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none; And they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they possessed not; And they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.* What folly is it, to toil and wear out our lives in the pursuit of those vain things, from which we may be snatched before we can cast another look at them!

Go, Fool, and dote upon thy own or others' beauty: but know, withal, that shortly a nest of worms will breed there; and suck corruption and nastiness out of that face, which hath been thy pride, and the beholders' sin and shame.

Go, Worldling, rake together thy wealth, and hoard up thy treasures: but know, withal, that, of all thy possessions, thou

* Virg. Æneid. l. viii.

† *Potantibus ergò Larvam argenteam attulit servus, sic aptam ut articuli ejus vertebræque locatæ in omnem partem flecterentur. Hanc cùm super mensam semel iterùmque abjecisset, et catenatio mobilis aliquot figuras exprimeret, Trimalcio adjecit, Heu, heu, nos miseros, quàm totus homuncio nil est! Sic erimus cuncti postquam nos auferet Orcus. Ergò vivamus, dum licet esse, benè. Petr.*

shalt shortly need no more than will but suffice to bury thee. Gold and silver are too heavy lading to be carried into the other world: nothing of them shall go with thee, unless it be their rust to witness against thee. If there be any difference, whether thou live rich or poor, honourably or despised, in pain or in pleasure; yet, certainly, there is none when thou comest to die. What is it to a dying man, whether his chamber be richly furnished or not? whether he breathe out his soul in a palace or in a cottage? We shall not take pleasure in summing up our estates, and counting how much worth we shall die, and how many hundreds or thousands we shall leave behind us: these things will be then as far from being our care, as they are now from being our concernments.

Let the Voluptuous man pursue his delights and pastimes: but let him know, withal, that he doth but thrust away his days to make way for death. That hour is coming, when he will more earnestly wish to gain time, than ever he studied to spend it.

Let the Ambitious court honours and preferments: but, withal, let him know, that it will be no great comfort to him in death, that he falls under a bigger name and title than others. What are they, when they stand upon the highest pinnacle of worldly dignities, but bladders swelled up with the breath of the popular rout? Nothings, set a strut? Chess-men, that, on the board, play the king and nobles; but, in the bag, are of the same materials and rank with others?

Though now it be hard to persuade men of these things, yet powerful and eloquent death will certainly persuade them, better than all the sermons or demonstrations that ever they heard. At high-noon, things cast but a short and little shadow; but, in the declining evening, these shadows are extended to a huge length and vast dimensions. So it is with us: in the high-noon of our age, in the heat and vigorous warmth of our blood, the world seems to cast but little shadow; all things in it appear to us bright and orient: but, when our evening begins to decline and our days to shut in, when our eyes shall swim in night and darkness, then the shadows are extended, and all the bright and glittering things of the world will appear to us nothing but gloominess and horror.

USE ii. Since we all know that we shall die, let this serve TO EXHORT US SERIOUSLY TO PREPARE FOR OUR DEATH.

That our souls are immortal and must live for ever, is a dictate of nature itself, if we had not Scripture to confirm it: and those, who have ever ventured to deny it, have rather spoken their wishes than their belief. They are divine sparks kindled only by the breath of God; and the same breath, which kindled them, hath likewise pronounced that they shall never die. Shortly they must launch forth into eternity; and know by experience the truth of those impressions, which God hath stamped upon them concerning their own endless duration.

It will not be many years nor days hence, before every one of us be in our eternal state. There stands nothing between us and it, but this thin mud-wall of our bodies: a weak fence against so many diseases and casualties, as may every day and hour assault us. What Anacharsis said * of those who sailed, that they were but four inches removed from death, is true of us all: we are but four inches removed from death and eternity. Nay, a wound, that digs not half so deep, may dispatch us. Our souls are in our bodies only as a little air included in a thin bubble; and, when that breaks, oh what or where are we? gone, in an instant, out of all the businesses and pleasures of this present life, into an estate for ever unchangeable.

Now what is your care, and what do you chiefly busy yourselves about? Death is approaching you, armed with ten thousand woes and plagues; and is it time for you to trifle away your precious moments, moments on which depends your eternity, in sports, or compliments, or impertinent employments? Is it time for you to muse what garb you will wear; what visit you will make, whether at this house or the next; what recreation shall pass away to-morrow, whether the hawk or the hound; when, all this while, death hath you in full chase? While you are contriving your profits and pleasures, your recreations and employments, and sharing out your lives among them, a sudden, unseen, and unthought of hand of God snatcheth you from them all, and all these vain thoughts perish with you. Is this providing for eternity? is this improving your short time, and few minutes for heaven? Pity it is, that ever a precious and immortal soul should be entrusted to the care and management of such brutes; who, by minding nothing but their sensual ease and delights, their food and fodder, degrade it in this world, and destroy it in the next.

Now, to provide for eternity, I know no better rule, than to

* Laertius in vitâ Anachars.

do nothing but what thou mightest be contented to be found doing when Christ shall come to judge thee: to live so, as if every day were thy last, and the very next to eternity. If it be not so, it is more than you or I know. Since we have no assurance of a day or hour longer, it is but reason and wisdom to look upon every one as the last.

Suppose now your chambers darkened, your friends standing round your beds mourning over you, a sad silence filling all the place, nothing heard but your groans, or theirs to answer yours; when your souls, sitting on your lips, shall look over into eternity and flutter to be gone; when they shall, like the flame of an expiring lamp, vibrate and catch at the exhausted body; how would you then spend that small scantling of remaining time? would you be laying up for years? would you be contriving for your vain pleasures? or would you send for your idle and debauched companions, to laugh and jest away that last hour, as well as the rest? No: these designs and this mirth are now dashed: now, the necessities of the soul begin to crowd hard upon you: the sight of a severe Judge and dreadful tribunal, the worryings of an accusing conscience, the fearful review of past sins, and expectation of attending torments, now shake out all such, once so delightful and contenting thoughts; and, now, when your souls are departing out of your bodies, they begin to come into your remembrance.

Hearken to the voice of dying men. What say they? Oh, that God would pardon and accept them! Oh, that he would spare them a little to repent and reform! Or, else, oh, that he would assure them of his favour, and receive them to his mercy! This is the language, and these are the cares of the sick-bed, when death comes nigh to them, and looks them in the face.

And why is it not your care now, in your health and strength? What assurance have you, that you are not now as nigh death, as those, who lie thus languishing, and complaining of their folly for neglecting their souls till this last hour? God doth not always give warning, but some he strikes suddenly; and, for ought we know, we may be as near our deaths, as those, whom their friends and physicians have given over. However, should God spare you longer, yet the duration of your life is most uncertain; and, to delay our preparations for death upon the uncertain continuance of life, is such stupendous madness and folly, that certainly were there not witchcraft and sorcery used upon us by the Devil, a man, who hath the free command of

his wits and reason, could never be guilty of it. Night is hastening, and spreading its wings over us: the grave expects us, and bids its other corpses make room: death is grasping us in its cold arms, and ready to carry us to the dreadful tribunal; and, yet, how little of our great work is done! We burn away our precious days, and miserably waste our light and our life: we exhaust our strength, and lavish out our affections upon toys and fond nothings: and that life of ours, which the Psalmist calls a *tale*, for its shortness, we make a tale for its vanity. We spend it most frivolously, till the days of darkness, which are many, come upon us; and then think to prepare for eternity, when we are fit for nothing else, and least of all for that.

Some sad instances there have been, of those, who, having neglected this great work till the end of their life, have then spent that little remnant of time which they had, in crying out for more. It may be so with you, if your consciences be not awakened sooner, than by the pain and disquiet of your sick-beds: you will then, with horror, cry out, "More time, Lord, more time!" but it will not be granted: the term is fixed: the last hour hath struck: the last sand is run: and, as you and your works are then found, so must you go into eternity.

Methinks, this is such a consideration, as must needs prevail with all the world. Our time is but short and momentary: we are but of yesterday, and possibly may not be to-morrow: and God hath suspended eternity upon the improvement of this moment; a few hours will determine our everlasting condition; and, according as they are spent, so must our doom be, either eternal happiness or eternal misery. And why should our precious souls be so vile in our eyes, as to lose them for very sloth and carelessness? Why should we hearken to the suggestions of the flesh, or the allurements of the world? Stand off: we are working for eternity: an eternity, that is but a few days hence; a boundless, a bottomless, and endless state, into which we know not how soon we may enter. This is a motive, which cannot but prove effectual, with all, who have their right understandings about them. But many are so strangely besotted by the Devil, that, though they hear these truths, truths which they cannot deny, which they cannot doubt of; yet they live at such a rate of sin and security, as if their eternity were to be expected here, or none to be expected hereafter.

Now if we have carefully prepared ourselves for death, it will be to us a repose, instead of a terror. The Scripture doth

frequently compare it to sleep, and it is indeed the most natural resemblance that can be given. While we are asleep, we neither see nor hear: all our senses are locked up: we enjoy none of the delights of life; no comfort in our friends, in our riches or estates: all those things are cancelled out of our memories. And what more than this can death do to a believer? and, therefore, they are said to *sleep in Jesus*: 1 Thess. iv. 14. It is a sleep, which gives them rest from their labours: a sleep, which opens their eyes, before benighted with ignorance and error: a sleep, which deprives them of the dim and muddy light of this world; but brings them to the vision of that radiant source and fountain of all lights, in whose beams angels do for ever rejoice and are for ever cherished.

Why should we then be so terrified at the apprehensions of death? We may truly say, the bitterness of it is past: its sting is taken out. We may safely take this serpent into our bosoms: though it hiss against us, it cannot wound us: yea, instead of wounding us, it is reconciled to us, and become one of our party. And, therefore, when the Apostle is drawing up a Christian's inventory, he reckons death as part of his goods: *whether...life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours*: 1 Cor. iii. 22: and, so, Phil. i. 21. *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. And well may a Christian count death among his gains, since it is the hand of death, which draws the curtain of the great tabernacle, and lets us in to see God face to face in that palace of inestimable majesty, where we shall have the strong rays of his glory beat full upon us, and be ourselves made strong enough to bear them. Yea, these bodies of ours, which are the only part that can suffer damage, shall have it abundantly recompensed at the resurrection: they are *sown in weakness*, but shall be *raised in power*: they are *sown in dishonour*, but *raised in glory*: 1 Cor. xv. 43: these frail and dull clods shall then become impassible as angels, subtle as a ray of light, bright as the sun, and nimble as the wings of lightning.

IV. Having thus exhorted you to prepare for death, I know not how farther to enforce it upon you with greater advantage, than by propounding to you **THE EXAMPLE OF THIS NOBLE PERSON DECEASED**, whose whole life was a more serious preparation for death, than most men's dying thoughts.

He well knew that the Nobility of his extraction would be no

excuse to him from the peremptory summons of death. Neither did he make it any excuse to him from an industrious and strict preparation for it. This he testified by the series of his whole life; in which there evidently appeared such an awe of God, and a real sense of true piety and religion, as clearly evinced that he had strong and habituated meditations of that great levelling day, wherein the highest shall stand upon no higher ground than the meanest.

He did not think religion any stain to his Honour, nor minding heaven to be the employment of those only who have nothing on earth.

Indeed, irreligion and atheism are now reckoned as a piece of good breeding, among the great ones of the world: it is now counted as a sign of a degenerated and low-sunk spirit, to acknowledge even God himself for their superior. Those are cried up as the wits of the time, who can daringly dispute it against whatsoever is sacred in Christianity; yea, against the being of God himself. It is now become an argument of a judicious and gallant mind, to call into question the most fundamental maxims of our faith; and the authority too of those Holy Oracles, which confirm them. Reason alone is extolled as the best and most sufficient guide, both in matters of belief and practice; and they appeal to that for their judge, which commonly, by their debauches and intemperancies, they either so corrupt that it will not discern the truth, or else so sot and stupify that it cannot. And, thus, as the moon shines brightest when it is at the greatest opposition to the sun, these think their reason then shines brightest, when it stands at the greatest opposition to God.

This Noble Person, whose Reason had as fleet a wing and could soar as high a pitch as any of theirs who pretend to nothing above it, yet saw it reason to give his faith the precedence; and always found more acquiescence in a *Thus saith the Lord*, than in the most critical researches, and positive conclusions of his reason. So reverend an esteem had he for those sacred dictates of Scripture, that, though his wit and parts shone forth to admiration in whatsoever he pleased to employ them about, yet he never presumed to exercise them on that common-place of abusing divine verities: he was not ambitious to commence a wit, by blasphemy; nor did he pretend to ingenuity, by being impious. But, whereas too many use their wit in jesting at them, he shewed his holy wisdom in believing and obeying. Other books he made the ornament of his mind: this, the

guide of his life. He knew what others, but did what God spake.

He was not made a Christian out of Old Heathens; nor owed his virtues to the sage precepts of Plutarch or Epictetus. These are now become the penmen and evangelists of our young gentry. Seneca is with them preferred before St. Paul, though his chief credit be that he wrote so well that some have mistakingly thought him Paul's disciple. The virtue of this Noble Person acknowledged a more divine original; being formed in him by the same Spirit, that gave him rules to act it. This taught him to outstrip, in true wisdom, temperance, and fortitude, not only whatsoever those starched moralists did, but whatsoever they wrote; and, whereas they prescribed but the exercise of Virtue, he sublimed it, and made it Grace.

Next to his absolute subjection to God, was his obedience unto his honourable, and now disconsolate Mother: wherein he was to such a degree punctual, that, as her wisdom commanded nothing but what was fit, so his duty disputed not the fitness of things beyond her command. His demeanour toward her was most submissive: and towards all so obliging, that it was but the same thing to know and admire him.

His Converse gave the world a singular pattern of harmless and inoffensive mirth; of a gentility, not made up of fine clothes and hypocritical courtship; a sweetness and familiarity, that, at once, gained love and preserved respect; a grandeur and nobility, safe in its own worth, nor needing to maintain itself by a jealous and morose distance.

Never did vice, in youth, find a more confirmed goodness. So impregnable was he against the Temptations, which gain an easy access to those of his rank and quality, that they could neither insinuate into him by their allurements, nor force him by their importunities.

Nor did he think it enough to secure his mind from the infection of vice, unless also he secured his Fame from the suspicion of it. Some, indeed, owe their innocence to their dulness and stupidity; and are only not vicious, because not witty enough to be takingly and handsomely wicked. His virtue was of choice; and the severest exercise of it mingled with such charms from his parts and ingenuity, that his very seriousness was more alluring, than those light divertisements in others which entice only because they please.

His apprehension was quick and piercing, his memory faithful

and retentive, his fancy spritful and active; and his judgment overruling them all, neither prejudicated by vulgar opinions, nor easily cozened by varnished and plausible error.

After all this, there can be nothing wanting to make up a most complete and absolute person, but only Industry to quicken his parts, and Time to ripen both to perfection.

His Industry was remarkable, in the assiduousness of his studies: where he spent not his hours in plays or romances, those follies of good wits; but in the disquisition of solid and masculine knowledge: in which he outstripped even those, who were to depend upon learning for their livelihood; and had no other revenue, than what arose out of their fruitful and well-cultivated brains.

And, as for that other, I mean Time, to mature these growing hopes, that sad Providence which hath called us together to this mournful solemnity, hath denied it: by a sudden and surprising stroke cutting off his days, and thereby rendering that virtue, those parts, that industry, useless to us in any thing but the Example; and I should say unprofitable to him too, but only that, which he never had opportunity to employ in this world, hath I doubt not, fitted him for a better.

A DISCOURSE

ON MAN'S MORTALITY.

FROM HEB. ix. 27.

IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE ; BUT AFTER THIS THE
JUDGMENT.

A SERMON of Death hath then a double advantage to make deep impressions upon us, when it is attended with a Spectacle of Mortality.

Were there but the sad pomp of a funeral now presented before you, a dead corpse brought to be interred, a grave digged through into the earth, dry and rotten bones lying scattered about the mouth of it in fearful confusion, a solemn train of mourners tolled along the streets by the doleful moan of a bell; did you see the dead laid down in the dust, the place of darkness and silence, their friends groaning out their last farewell, clods of earth falling in upon them, and striking a horrid murmur upon their coffins; had your affections but such a preparatory as this is, possibly this might more easily work and move upon them: for it must needs make men serious and pensive to think, that this is but the pattern of what must befall themselves; and that all this must shortly be acted upon them, which they now see done unto others.

But, since this day presents us with no such solemnity, some perhaps may wonder that I have chosen this text and subject of mortality to treat upon.

Indeed, custom hath made it almost improper to preach of death, without a funeral; and to speak to men of their last end and dissolution, without setting before their eyes an example of it. Look well therefore one upon another. What are we all, but, as it were, so many corpses? so many spectacles of mor-

talities, rather to be numbered among the dead than among the living? Every day and hour wears away part of our lives; and so much of them as is already spent, so far are we already dead and buried. This present moment is the longest measure of our lives: what is past is dead to us; and what is to come is not yet born. How soon God may put a final period to our present state, how few times more our pulses may beat, and this busy breath in our nostrils return to us again, we know not. So frail and uncertain are our lives, that this may be truly a Funeral Sermon to some one of us before the close of it. Since then we are all of us thus subject to the stroke of death, it can never be unseasonable to warn you, that you be not surprised, and taken by it unprovided.

In the words now read, you have the great Statute-Law of Heaven; that law, which God hath passed upon all the children of men; and that is, that *it is appointed to them once to die*.

Now that I may make way to press upon you the serious consideration of your own mortality, let me briefly mark out some things, which tend to the explication of the words.

And,

First. In that the proposition is laid down in the text indefinitely, *It is appointed unto men*; it is that, which is equivalent to an universal, and reacheth to all men: *It is appointed unto all men once to die*.

We read of two only, in the whole book of God, who were exempted, by an extraordinary grace and peculiar privilege, from this great law of dying; and they were Enoch and Elias: of Enoch it is said, that he *walked with God, and he was not; for God took him*: Gen. v. 24: and of Elias it is said, that he *went up by a whirlwind into heaven*: 2 Kings ii. 11: the Great God, after a strange and unusual manner, tacked their temporal and eternal life together; making their time run itself into eternity, without any period or interruption. The Apostle also tells us, that all shall not die: to wit, at the Last Day, at the last appearing of Jesus Christ, there shall be a world full of persons, who shall not taste of death: all shall not die; but all shall *be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*: 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. These are exempted; and, being excepted, it is certain all the generations of men, from the first creation, to the last consummation of all things, are all appointed by God unto death.

Secondly. All must die once.

There is frequent mention made in Scripture of the First and Second Death. The First Death is the separation of the soul from the body: the Second Death is the separation of the soul from God. As the union of the soul and body is the life of man; so the union of God with the soul is the life of the soul. Now believers do not die this Second Death; for *on such*, as the Apostle speaks, *the second death hath no power*: Rev. xx. 6: they are still united unto God, after an unconceivable and ineffable manner. As when Christ lay in the grave, though his soul was truly separated from his body, yet both soul and body were hypostatically united to the godhead; so, also, though the natural union between a believer's soul and body be dissolved by death, yet both soul and body continue mystically united unto Christ, even in their separation one from another. It is not therefore this Second, but the First Death, which all are appointed unto. The hand of death must untie those secret and sweet bands: those vital knots, which fasten soul and body together, must fall asunder one day in every man.

Thirdly. It is appointed unto every man to undergo this first death.

It is decreed and ordained by God: and that, not upon the account of any natural necessity; but for the punishment of sin. The Apostle tells us plainly, that by sin death entered into the world. Death therefore is not so much a debt due to nature, as a debt due to the avenging justice of God: for, though man at first was created in pure nature, yet was he also created in a deathless state: and death seizeth upon us, not as we are men, but as we are sinners; liable to the curse of the Covenant of Works, containing in it that threatening, *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*. It is true, Adam, even before he sinned, had in him the contemperation of the same contrary qualities which we now have; and so, at least, had also the remote principles of death: but yet it is probable, that he was created with such a privilege, that he might by his own will sway and overrule the jars and discords of his elementary constitution, and continue himself in life so long as he should continue himself in obedience: however, whether it was so or otherwise, yet certain it is that death came into the world as the punishment of sin. So, then, it is not primarily man's nature, but man's sin, and the curse of the Law taking hold of him, that brought in this necessity of dying. Sin is not only the sting,

but the cause of death: and it gives it not only its terror, but its very being also. And, therefore, it is somewhat remarkable, that, among all the creatures in the world, man only is termed mortal: most certain it is that other creatures decay and perish, as well as he; yet, among all perishing things, man only hath that wretched denomination of being mortal, and there is good reason for it, since he alone, of all perishing things, being created immortal, voluntarily subjected himself unto death; and, by his own fault, brought upon himself that name of mortal, as a brand of perpetual infamy.

And thus now I come to the subject on which I intend to insist: and that is, **THE UNAVOIDABLENESS AND CERTAINTY OF DEATH.**

To go about to prove this, were to lose so much time: every one grants he must die. All other questions about man are answered by peradventures: if it be demanded, whether such an embryo shall see the light; what is the answer, but, perhaps it shall, perhaps it shall not? if it be born, and it be asked, whether it shall live, and grow up to age; why, perhaps so, perhaps otherwise: if it grow up to age, and enquiry be made, Shall it be rich, or shall it be poor? honourable, or despised? learned, or ignorant? what is the answer? only, perhaps it shall, perhaps not. But, if it be asked, whether it shall die? the answer now is, Yes; it is certain, without any peradventure: there is no doubt at all of this: it is appointed by God for men once to die. And, therefore, though physicians have written books of the preserving of health, yet never any wrote books of avoiding of death. We need no other proof of man's mortality, but to search into the records of the grave: there lie rich and poor, strong and weak, wise and foolish, holy and profane; the rubbish of ten thousand generations heaped one upon another, and this truth that all must die, written indelibly in their dust.

I. That, therefore, which I shall do, shall be, in an applicatory way, to make some **REFLECTIONS UPON THE BRUTISH STUPIDITY OF MEN**; who, though they know themselves mortal, yet thrust from themselves the thoughts of death, and neglect due preparations for it. Men live in the world, as if they were arbitrary of their own time; as if they should never die and come to judgment. Oh, the beastly sottishness

of men, who, though they see multitudes cut down daily by the hand of death, round about them, yet live carelessly and presumptuously, as if they were privileged persons, and death durst not touch them!

Should we make enquiry into the causes of this gross stupidity and sottishness, perhaps we should find it to proceed from some of these following.

i. THE GENERALITY OF MEN ARE SO IMMERSED AND DROWNED IN THE AFFAIRS AND PLEASURES OF LIFE, THAT ALL SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND PREPARATIONS FOR IT ARE SWALLOWED UP AND DEVoured BY THEM.

Their minds are taken up about other things, and their time spent upon other matters: like a heap of ants, that busily toil to gather in their provision, not regarding the foot which is ready to tread upon them. So is it with most men: they are taken up with impertinencies and vain things. One contrives how he may melt away his days in luxury and pleasure; and, with variety of invented delights, imp the wings of time, which, in their apprehensions, makes but slow haste, that so their days and hours may roll away the faster: these are such prodigals of their time, and lavish it away at that rate, as if their stock would last as long as eternity itself. Some are busily climbing up the steep ascent of honour and dignity; and are so taken up in seeking after promotions and new titles, that they forget their old stile of mortal creatures. Others are plotting, with the Fool in the Gospel, how they may grow rich, and lay up goods for themselves for many years as they fancy; when yet they know not but God may take away their souls from them this very night: and what then remains to them of all that they have thus greedily scraped together? O vain and foolish men! are these the things, which you set your hearts upon? must the world drink up all your thoughts; and death, which shortly will snatch you from all your enjoyments here below, be forgotten by you?

ii. MEN PUT OFF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR IT, BECAUSE THEY GENERALLY LOOK UPON IT AS AFAR OFF.

This is the greatest sottishness in the world; and yet most men are too guilty of it. Those, who are young and in the prime of their days, if it be asked them what they think of death, will

readily answer, that they think they ought of right and course to live till they are aged; and they, who are aged, will tell you their weaknesses and decays are not so many or so great, but they may well weather away a few more years: those, who are healthful and strong, think surely they need not prepare for dying, till God by some sickness sends them a summons; and those, whom God is pleased to vouchsafe a summons by sickness and distempers, alas, they think that it is yet possible for them to escape from them again. And thus all are ready to thrust death from them, and to put the evil day afar off: and, though God hath told out to them but a few days or hours, yet they liberally and bountifully reckon upon years and ages; as if their time were not in God's hands, but their own. It is a true saying, that usually the hope of a long life, is the cause of an evil life: suppose now that every one of us knew for a certainty, that our lives must run out with the glass which is before us, that at the end of the hour God would strike us all dead upon the place, should we not all of us have more lively apprehensions of death and eternity than ever yet we have had? should we not pour out our souls, before God requires them from us, in holy affections and fervent prayers? should we give scope to the gaddings of our thoughts, and the vanity of our hearts? should we think of such a vain pleasure, or such a worldly employment, if God now from heaven should speak audibly to us and bid us give an account of our stewardship, for we must be no longer stewards? No, certainly: it is impossible that men should thus behave themselves. And why, Sirs, is it not so with you always? For ought you know, that film and bubble which holds your lives may be now breaking, your graves may be ready to be digging, and the last sand in your glass may be now running: however, certain it is, that it cannot be long before it will be so with all of us. Did we but seriously consider, by what small pins this frame of man is tacked together, it would appear to us to be no less than a miracle that we live one day, yea one hour to an end.

iii. MEN GENERALLY PUT OFF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH AND THEIR PREPARATION FOR IT, BECAUSE OF THOSE FRIGHTFUL TERRORS AND THAT INSUPPORTABLE DREAD, WHICH SUCH APPREHENSIONS BRING WITH THEM.

Death is that, which, above all things, human nature most

abhors. Oh! to think of the separation of those near and dear companions, the soul and body! of the debasement, dishonour, and horror of the grave; that there we must lie, in a bed of stench and rottenness, under a coverlet of worms crawling upon us, consuming and mouldering away to dust in oblivion and forgetfulness! Oh! these are too sad and melancholy thoughts, for the jovial world to entertain and dwell upon. But, though the consideration of these things is very unwelcome, yea very dismal unto the minds of sinners; yet is there still far worse behind, and that which carries in it far greater terror and amazement, and that is the sin which deserves death, and the hell which follows it: for, as the Apostle says, 1 Cor. xv. 56. *the sting of death is sin*. And it is no wonder, that men, who are conscious to themselves of condemning guilt, dare not think of standing before the dreadful tribunal of God; and death is God's serjeant to arrest them, and to bring them thither. They cannot bear the thoughts of eternal vengeance, and prepared torments, to be for ever inflicted on them, by the almighty power of an incensed God; and therefore it is no wonder, that they put far from them the thoughts of death, because their consciences tell them that that day, whensoever it comes, will be to them an evil day.

Many more reasons might be given of this brutishness of men, in putting off the thoughts of death and preparations for it: but these shall suffice.

II. The next thing shall be to lay down some **CONSIDERATIONS**, which may fore-arm Christians **AGAINST THE FEARS AND TERRORS OF DEATH**; and make them willing to submit unto this law of dying, unto which God hath subjected all men.

And

i. **IF THE SOUL BE IMMORTAL, AS CERTAINLY IT IS, AND THAT, PARTING FROM THIS, IT ENTERS UPON A BETTER LIFE THAN THIS, WE MAY WELL THEN BE CONTENTED TO DIE UPON THAT ACCOUNT.**

No man, says a Roman Author, thinks death is much to be avoided, since immortality follows death. I am very sensible how hard a task it is to persuade men to be willing to die, but yet let me ask you, if you are believers, (for, in this, I speak only unto such) what is there in death, that is so terrible to you?

I know it is monstrous and full of horror, if we consider nothing but the corruption of the flesh, the ghastly paleness, the stiff, cold, and grim visage, the distorted eyes and trembling limbs of dying persons; and, afterwards, think of the stench and filthiness of the grave; and, lastly, the dissipation of the visible part of man: all these considerations make death very terrible and full of horror to us. But he, who shall consider, after all this, his spiritual and invisible part, what can he see in death, which is not very desirable to him? the body rests from its labours, and the soul enjoys its reward in heaven: if you are hereby taken away from conversing with men, yet the soul is elevated to an acquaintance with angels: that, is still alive in its own nature: the soul lives for ever, being placed above the common arrests of death. We find, to this purpose, after that God had tried the patience of Job by the loss of all his substance, and afterwards of all his children also, he restores to him double whatever he had taken from him: so we read in the holy story, *The Lord gave unto Job twice as much as he had before*: Job xlii. 10: now whereas, at first, Job had three thousand camels, God restores to him six thousand; whereas, before he had seven thousand sheep, God restores to him fourteen thousand; and so of all the rest, double the number of what he lost: But, when God comes to recompense to him the loss of his children, which doubtless were of far greater value than all the rest; whereas he had seven sons and three daughters, God restores to him the same number again, not double in these as he did in all the rest: and wherefore did God double his camels, his sheep, and his oxen, and not his children? because his children were not so dead as were his camels, and the rest of his brute creatures: their souls remained immortal and entire still after death: so that God, in giving Job seven sons and three daughters, did double them, notwithstanding, though he gave him no more than he had at first. So, here, though we die, yet death doth us no injury: our better part survives; and, if we are believers, it survives in such unconceivable joys, as that all the pleasures of the world are but misery and wretchedness compared to them.

ii. THE WHOLE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IS FOUNDED UPON A HOPE THAT CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED BUT BY DYING.

And if so, that man's mistake must needs be inexcusable,

who abhors that, which alone can bring him to the possession of his hopes and desires. Christians! what is it that you hope for? Is it not to arrive at glory, with *an innumerable host of angels*, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*? to see God, and to rejoice in him at a nearer hand than you now do here below? to be for ever blessed in the close embraces of the sovereign good? And what other way is there of obtaining this, but only by dying? Death is now made to us an inlet to glory, the very gate to heaven. It is therefore unreasonable to fear that, which is the only way to obtain what we hope for.

iii. THIS DEATH, THOUGH SO MUCH DREADED, IS NO OTHER THAN A QUIET SLEEP.

So the Scripture often represents it to us, under the notion of sleep: *Them....which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*. Sleep is the natural resemblance of death. Sleep and death are very near a-kin. When we are asleep, we see not, we hear not: all our senses are locked up from the enjoyment of any worldly delights: we take no comfort in our friends, in our riches, or estates; all these are cancelled out of our minds. And what more doth death do, than cancel these things out of men's memories? and yet the weary labourer lays himself down with contentment, to take his sleep until the morning; and why may not we also lay down ourselves with the same peace and contentment in our graves, to take our rest and sleep until the morning of the Resurrection? Indeed, the sleep of death is different from natural sleep; since that deprives us of natural light, but this sleep of death brings us to the vision of true inaccessible light. What then is there in death, that we should stand in dread of it? why should that be feared, by those, for whom the sting of it is already taken out? such may safely take this serpent into their bosoms: for, though it hiss at them, yet it cannot wound or hurt them; nay, instead of wounding them, it is reconciled to them, and become one of their party. The Apostle, therefore, reckoning up the inventory of a Christian, reckons this among them: *Whether life or death....all is yours*: 1 Cor. iii. 22: and, in another place, he tells us, that to him *to live was Christ, and to die was gain*: Phil. i. 21. And well may a Christian account death among his gains: for it is the hand of death, which draws the curtain, and lets him in to see God face to face in heaven; that palace of inestimable pleasure and delight, where the strongest beams of glory shall beat fully upon

our faces, and where we shall be made strong enough to bear them. Neither doth death bring any detriment to our bodies, since they shall be new moulded at the Resurrection; when *this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible put on incorruption*: 1 Cor. xv. 53. when these dull lumps shall become impassible as the angels, subtle as a ray of light, bright as the sun, and nimble as lightning. Who is there, that hath hopes of heaven, that would have this law of death reversed? Who would be confined to live always a wretched life here on the earth, which sin and sorrow share between them? A holy soul cannot but long and be impatient, in breathing forth desires after the kind office of death, to deliver it into so great and incomprehensible a glory; crying out earnestly, with the Apostle, I desire to be dissolved, *and to be with Christ, which is best of all*: Phil. i. 23.

III. Now of what **GREAT CONCERNMENT** this subject of man's mortality is, God, by his Providence, since I last spake in this place, hath sadly evinced; and, by a near instance, hath confirmed what I then preached unto you, of the frailty and uncertainty of this present life.

Happy were it for us, if either sermons or examples might awaken us to a serious consideration, that we ourselves also must shortly die; and, it may be, as suddenly. Are we not all subjected to the same attack? Hath not God's hand kneaded our bodies out of the same clay; and may not his fingers crumble them again into the same dust? Certainly, the cords of our tabernacles may be as easily unloosed and cut asunder, as theirs.

I have read of a great emperor, who, to engrave upon himself the deeper apprehensions of his own frailty and mortality, caused his own funerals to be solemnized while he was yet living, laying himself down in his tomb, weeping over himself, as his own mourner. If there were any advantage in this to prepare him to die at last really, by dying thus first in an emblem, we may almost daily have the same. There is not a funeral of any of our relations or acquaintance, which we are called to give our attendance upon, but, by serious and solemn reflections upon ourselves, we may make our own: and if, by beholding others nailed up in their coffins, laid down in their cold graves, and covered over with earth that they may become a feast for worms, we reckon ourselves among the number of them, we shall not be very much mistaken; for this is only but a few

days to anticipate what shall shortly be our state and condition. This advantage we ourselves may make of the death of others, to look upon it as a resemblance at least of our own; what is the language of every grave which we see open its mouth to receive into it the dead body of some neighbour or acquaintance, but only this, That we also are mortal and perishing? there is not a broken skull, or a rotten bone, that lies scattered about the grave, but hath Death and Mortality written upon it, and calls loudly upon us to prepare ourselves to take up our abode in the same darkness and corruption with them; and if, upon every such sad occasion, we do not make a particular application thereof unto our own selves, we not only lose our friends' lives, but their very deaths also.

And yet, in this affair, which might be of great advantage to us, we are exceeding faulty: for the reflections, which we make on the death of others, are usually very impertinent, and make no lasting impressions upon us. When death comes and mows down our acquaintance and relations round about us, the reflection, which we usually make, is more upon the loss that we have sustained by their death, than upon the example they are thereby made to us of our own frailty and mortality: and, thereby, as God by his providence hath deprived us of the comfort, which we had in their lives; so we deprive ourselves of the instruction and benefit, which we might have by their death. Or, if some extraordinary circumstance, that appears in the death of others, strikes us into serious thoughts of our own; yet, usually, they are but short-lived and fleeting: for a while, it may be, we think of human frailty, and the mutability of our present state; but these thoughts soon wear off, and we return to the same vanity and wretched security as before; for such dying meditations of death, are usually very unprofitable.

It is with most men, as it is with a flock of sheep, which graze fearlessly, till the shepherd rushes in among them, and lays hold of one of them for the slaughter: and this presently frights them; making them leave their food, and run scattering about the field: but, no sooner is the tumult over, than they flock together again; and feed as securely, without thoughts of death or danger, as before. So, truly, is it with most men: when either the report is spread abroad that such or such a person is dead, and it may be suddenly, by some sudden and unexpected stroke; or when they are called to visit some dying person, where they behold departing pangs, distorted eyes,

quivering limbs, a wan and ghastly corpse, the image of death in all its lively terrors; if they have any remainders of natural tenderness, it must needs strike them into pensiveness, to think that one day this must be their own case, and that therefore it behoves them to be in continual preparation for this last and dreadful change: but, no sooner is the dead interred, and the grave filled up again, but all these sage and serious thoughts vanish, and they return to the same excess of sin and pleasure as before. This is the brutish folly and sottishness of most men.

But oh, why should not men always keep alive vigorous thoughts and meditations of death? Are they not always alike mortal? Are they not as much subject to the arrest of death at other times, as when they see examples of mortality before their eyes? The law stands still in force, unrepealed in heaven, that *it is appointed unto all men once to die*. Indeed, it fares with such as these, as ordinarily it doth with malefactors, who fear not the penalty of the law till they see it executed upon others. Let us therefore act rationally as men; and, so long as we are in danger, be kept by that danger prepared to entertain that, which we know is irreversibly appointed unto us.

IV. But now, beside this general appointment of God, that all shall die, there is a PARTICULAR APPOINTMENT, which reacheth to every particular circumstance of man's death; the time when, the manner how, we shall die. These are unalterably determined, in God's secret counsel.

To speak a little briefly to this.

i. GOD HATH PUNCTUALLY AND EXACTLY DETERMINED THE TIME OF OUR DEATH TO A VERY MOMENT.

The Great God, in whose hands our lives, our breath, and all our ways are, turns up our glass; and puts such a measure of sand into it, and no more: it is he, who prefixes it to run to such a length of time, and then determines it shall run no longer: it is he, who is Lord of all Time, that writes our names upon so many days and hours as we shall live, as upon so many leaves of his book; and it is impossible for us to live one day or hour, which hath not our name written upon it by him from all eternity: it is God, who sets every one the bounds of their living, as well as *the bounds of their habitation*; Acts xvii. 26. beyond which they shall not be able to pass: the embryo, that

dies before ever it sees the light, fills up its time appointed by God ; as well as he, who lives to decrepit old age. And, therefore, though the Scripture and we use to say, Such or such an one is taken away *in the midst of his days* ; yet, simply in itself considered, that is impossible : the whole tale of days, which God hath appointed to every one, must be fulfilled ; and that to a very moment, according as the number of them is set down by God from all eternity : such expressions as these denote no more, than either that God cuts them off in the full strength and vigour of their years, when yet they might, according to the course of nature and human probability, have lived longer ; or else, comparing the shortness of their lives with the length of others, God seems to break it off in the very midst, before he had finished his work. I shall not enter into a dispute, whether the term of life be fixed or moveable : methinks Job hath fully stated and determined the question : *Is there not, says he, an appointed time to man upon earth ? are not his days also like the days of a hireling ?* Job vii. 1 : now a hireling hath a time of service prefixed ; and, when this is expired, he is discharged from his labour : God hath sent all men into the world as so many hirelings ; and, as soon as these days are expired, he takes them from their labour to their reward. *Are not my days as the days of a hireling ?* So Job speaks also, in another chapter, concerning man : *His days are determined : the number of his months are with thee : thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass :* Job xiv. 5 : what can be more punctual and particular ? It is true, however, that, though God hath thus numbered out our days, and set us our bounds ; yet we may well say, that, whoever dies, might have lived longer, had they made use of the right means : as Martha said unto our Saviour, John xi. 21. *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died ;* so may we say, “ If such and such means had been used, and such remedies applied, this or that person had not died ; ” but, withal, we must observe also, that that God, who hath prefixed to every one his term of life, hath also ordained, in his own counsel and purpose, that those means, which are proper to prolong life beyond that term, should, through some unavoidable mistake or mishap, either not be known or not used. This therefore may be of great support unto us, as against all inordinate fears of our own death, so against all inordinate grief and sorrow for the death of others ; to consider, that all our *times are in God's hands* : he measures out every day to us ; and,

as he hath appointed bounds to us beyond which we shall not pass, so also hath he appointed that we shall certainly reach unto those bounds. His all-wise Providence disposeth of the meanest and smallest concernments of our lives; and, therefore, much more of our lives themselves: and, if a hair of our heads cannot, much less shall not we ourselves *fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father.*

ii. AS GOD HATH APPOINTED THE EXACT CRITICAL HOUR, SO ALSO THE PARTICULAR MANNER OF OUR DEATH.

It is he, who appoints, whether it shall be sudden or foreseen; by diseases, or by casualty; whether the thread of our life shall be snapped in pieces by some unexpected accident, or worn and fretted away by some tedious and lingering consumption, or burned asunder by some fiery fever. In whatever manner or shape death may appear to us, is a secret known only unto God; but this we know, that it is always his serjeant, and wears his livery; and all the circumstances of our death are of God's appointment, as well as our death itself. And, in whatever shape it shall appear to us, if we diligently endeavour by a holy life to prepare ourselves for it, it shall not be frightful or terrible to us.

V. Let us now make some PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of this.

USE i. If God thus unalterably appoints to us our last period, if he hath thus appointed us to die, if all men are concluded under that irrevocable law: LET THIS THEN SERVE TO CONVINCE US OF THE GROSS AND NOTORIOUS FOLLY, OF SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS EAGERLY UPON THIS PRESENT WORLD, a world, which we must shortly leave behind us.

Death, within a very little while, will most certainly pluck us from it; and it will prove a violent rending to us, if our affections are inordinately set upon any thing here below. It was a strange and perverse use also, that the Ancient Heathens made of the necessity of dying; when, in their feasts, their custom was to bring in the resemblance of an anatomy to their guests, thereby to excite them to mirth and voluptuousness, while they should relish such delights as were then before them, because shortly they must be as much dust and bones as what they saw: like those whom the Apostle mentions, 1 Cor.

xv. 32. who said, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* But how much better use doth the same Apostle teach us to make of this, when, in the same Epistle, he tells us, *But this I say, brethren, the time is short?* What then? why, says he, *It remaineth, therefore, that both they, that have wives, be as though they had none: and they, that weep, as though they wept not; and they, that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they, that buy, as though they possessed not; and they, that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.* Death, one would think, should beat down the price of the world, in every wise man's esteem: why should we lay out our affections upon those things, from which we may be ravished in a moment? both they and we perish in the using of them: they are dying comforts; and we must die also, who enjoy them. Oh! what folly then is it to toil and wear away our lives in pursuing such vain things, from which we may be snatched before we can cast another look at them! Sour death will soon convince us, that *all is but vanity and vexation of spirit*, which we here set our eyes and hearts upon.

And, therefore,

USE ii. Seeing, by the appointment of God, we must all shortly die, LET US BE PERSUADED TO BE ALWAYS IN A READINESS AND PREPARATION FOR IT.

Our souls are immortal, and must live for ever; and, when our bodies die and fall into the dust, they immediately enter into an estate which is for ever unalterable.

Here I shall only lay down a few Directions, and so conclude.

1. *Wean your hearts from an inordinate love of the world.*

Death must and will pluck you from it: and, oh! it will be a violent rending, if your affections be glued to it. Consider, that all things in this present world are fading and perishing; but your precious souls are ever living and immortal. Be not, therefore, unequally yoked: join not your ever-living souls to dying comforts. This is a tyranny, worse than that, which was exercised by those of old, who tied living bodies to dead carcases. Oh! what a sad parting hour will it be to thee, when thou shalt go into another world, and leave behind thee all that thou countest good in this! How wilt thou protract and linger; and wishly look back again, upon all those precious vanities, and dear nothings and follies, in which here thou placedst thy happiness and contentment! But, when the heart sits loose from

all these things, with what satisfaction shall we be able to die; accounting what we lose by death to be no great matter, because what we gain thereby will be infinitely more to our advantage!

2. Would you be prepared for death? *Beware, then, that you do not defer your repentance one day or hour longer, upon any presumption of the continuance of your life.*

Death depends not upon the warning of a sickness. God doth not always afford it; but, sometimes, he doth execution, before he shoots off his warning-piece. And why may it not be so with you? However, it is possible your sickness may be such, as may render you incapable of doing your last good office for your soul. But, if it should be otherwise, yet this I am sure of, it is the unfittest time in all your life; to be then casting up your accounts, when you should be giving them up; to have your evidences for heaven then to clear up to your souls, when you should produce and shew them for your support and comfort.

3. *Live every day so, as if every day were your last and dying day, and the very next day allotted to you unto eternity.*

If it be not so, it is more than any of us know: and, since we have no assurance of one day or hour longer, it is but reason and wisdom to look upon every day, as that, which may prove our very last.

4. *Be constant in the exercise of a holy life; and always doing of that, which you would be content Christ should find you doing when he comes to summon you before his bar.*

Think with thyself, if thou wert now upon thy sick bed, and hadst received the sentence of death, and sawest thy friends stand mourning round about thee but not able to help thee; what would be thy thoughts and thy discourse then? Let the same thoughts and the same discourse fill up every day and hour of thy life: for thou knowest not, whether now this moment thou art not as near death, as if thy friends and relations, yea and thy physicians also, despaired of thy life, and had given thee over for dead.

5. *Labour to get an assurance of a better life, and this will prepare you for a temporal death.*

When you and all things in the world must take leave of one another and part for ever, then to have the sense of the love of God, of an interest in Jesus Christ, and the sight and view of your own graces; these will bear up your heart in a dying hour: these things are immortal, as your souls are; and will enter into

heaven with you, and abide there with you to eternity. Oh, whom will it not comfort, to think that death will change his bottle into a spring? Though, here, our water sometimes fails us; yet, in heaven, whither we are going, we shall bathe ourselves in an infinite ocean of delights, lying at the breasts of an infinite fountain of life and sweetness. Whoever hath such an assurance as this, cannot but welcome death; embracing it, not only with contentment, but with delight: and, while the soul is struggling and striving to unclasp itself, and to get loose from the body, it cannot but say, with holy longings and pantings, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
BLESSEDNESS OF THEM THAT DIE IN THE LORD.

FROM REV. xiv. 13.

AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD, FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.

NATURE hath impressed on us such horrid and dreadful notions of Death, and represented its visage so wan and ghastly, that, though nothing is more certain than that we must all die, yet nothing is more difficult than to persuade men to die willingly.

The philosophers have ransacked the whole magazine of reason; and have put into our hands all the weapons, which may help to embolden us to encounter this King of Terrors: yet, by their great preparations, instead of diminishing its dread, they have made it appear more fearful. And, indeed, whatsoever specious arguments reason can produce, they are rather for pomp than for use: there is not any thing in the sage philosophers for the “Contempt of Death,” which they offer to the world, but, if rationally examined, will prove no solid ground of peace in a dying hour: all, that is inculcated by them, is either concerning the necessity of dying; or, freedom by it from the care and trouble of this life; or, lastly, the hope of a future reward. Now what is it to tell us, that death is the common lot of all; and that every compounded being hath those fatal principles in it, which will certainly work its dissolution; and therefore it becomes the reason and spirits of men, to entertain the fate under which they fall, with a constancy unmoveable? Alas! what comfort is this, seeing the inevitableness is a thing which renders it so terrible! whereas that freedom, which it gives us from the cares and troubles of this life, is but

like the change of a fever into a lethargy, that brings such a gloomy quietness, wherein, as there is no sense of torment, neither is there of ease. Indeed, what they speak of a future reward is dry, or mean and sordid, in comparison of that solid joy, which God hath promised to us in his word: yet could reason alone make our right to it certain and evident, it would be a strong support against the fear of death, and a sovereign antidote against its envenomed sting: but reason hath prepared places of punishment, as well as bliss: and, besides, the consciences of all men have discovered to them that guilt, of which their reason can never discover an expiation; and so, instead of arming them against the fear of death, reason redoubleth its terrors, by proving us transgressors of the Law of Nature.

You see, then, that the best support, which reason can give, is not death-proof. The last encounter, that all must maintain against that last enemy, is too rough and boisterous for such arguments as these to make good. If men's consolations are no better, it will fare with them as with cunning fencers in a confused battle, which will soon put by all their artificial designs.

Indeed, that, which can make men meet death with undaunted boldness, must be something below reason; rashness, or human boldness: and something above reason; as divine grace and revelation.

Therefore our blessed Apostle, seeing the calamities, persecutions, and martyrdoms which befel the Church; that, as it was planted by the blood of Christ, so it was to be increased by the blood of his own members; that he might encourage them with unshaken resolution to encounter with their many deaths, he fetcheth not his arguments from the faint and gloomy discourses of reason, but from the infallible testimony of Divine Revelation: *I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.* But, lest this should be challenged by all, and so made a blessing as universal as their mortality, the Apostle enters a caveat against the most part of the world, and limits this blessing to them that die in the Lord: that is, either to those who die for the Lord, (and so the phrase may import suffering martyrdom for the name and profession of Christ) and wade through their own blood to that heaven which the Lord hath opened to them by his; or else they, who die in the true faith of Christ, united to him as members of his body-mystical.

And, indeed, if we consider the terrors of a natural death,

but much more the terrors of martyrdom, it is no more than needful, to have the blessing spoken of under such a doleful state, confirmed to us by the testimony of a heavenly voice. Think of the severe preparations of dying and languishing diseases; the reflect tossings, fire in the spirits, incessant groans, and the echoing back again from weeping friends; the quivering limbs, distorted eyes, fallen jaws; the agonies of the soul, and the working of itself from the earth oppressing of it, and darting itself from under the body by which it is fastened to the earth: think what it is, after so many disorders of the soul engaging themselves, being taken from its dearest companion; the earthly part left by death as a spectacle to its dearest relations, and to be by them delivered up as a prey to the stink of worms and rottenness. Would any one believe, that such a state as this is to be blessed, without a voice from heaven assuring of it? Those, whom God highly honours, every limb of whose body is a scene of a tragedy, upon whom the enraged persecutors have made an experiment of their wit in new-found cruelties, when it lay all mangled and weltering in its own gore, under the most exquisite torments that men could entail; would you think them in a blessed condition? Why, as their sufferings were beyond what human nature could bear; so also was their support from those strong consolations of God, (let down into their souls, whereby they tired out their tormentors, despising death, not accepting of deliverance, through the assurance of a heavenly revelation) beyond the apprehensions of human reason.

I. This BLESSING of theirs is branched out in Two particulars:

Rest from their labours.

Their Works do follow them.

i. To begin with the first, their REST FROM THEIR LABOURS.

1. *They rest from the Turmoils and Vexations of this Life.*

This life is nothing but a huddle of business, a swarm of employments; having more of the sting than the honey in it. If we be rich in the world, this makes us spread wider, and stand the fairer mark for trouble. If we are in a high degree in the world, that only satisfies our interest, and gives every cross and affliction an advantage to wound us in many concernments: if we are mean and low, as it exposeth us to the contempt and

injury of others, so it engageth us to rescue ourselves from their pressures and power; and, by our sweat and pains, we lose the comforts of life, only to gain the conveniences of it. Even those petty inconsiderable enjoyments, which are but for the bare sustentation of life, cause such care and trouble, such aching hearts and weary heads, that they turn our bread into stones, and our fish into scorpions. If we have much business in the world, our calling becomes a temptation and a burden to us: if we have none, we become burdens to ourselves and others. God hath written vexation upon every condition: if Providence create not trouble for us, our own folly will. We all, like spiders, spend our time and care to weave a web out of our own bowels: and we spend more to get a prey, than that prey, when taken, will again repay us. If any flaw be in our designs, if any cross that intervenes doth break them, then they become vexation and a discontent unto us. Thus hath man made himself a drudge to that, over which God hath made him a lord. The sweat of Adam's brow streams along with us, and the curse with it; and, though we toil in the world, yet it brings forth nothing but thorns and briars, which pierce us through with many sorrows: but death will shortly lay us to bed in our graves, where, as Job speaks, *the weary are at rest*: Job iii. 17. and all our cares, sorrows, and troubles will vanish as soon as our heads touch that pillow. *There is no work, no device.....in the grave, whither thou art going*: that is a deep repose and sweet retirement, where we shall have none of the afflictions nor troubles of this life to interrupt us. And the soul, being regardless of the poor concernments here in its passage to heaven, shakes off from its wings that mire and dirt wherewith it was clogged here, in conversing with earthly things; and associates itself with a whole ring of Angels, Patriarchs, Saints, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*, and there keeps an eternal festival.

2. *They rest from all the Sorrows and Sufferings of this Life.*

What is our life, but a bubble? our sighs are the air, and our tears the water, that make it. The first possession, which we take of the world, is by crying; and there is nothing, which we hold by a surer tenure, than our grief. Tears are the inheritance of our eyes: either our sufferings or our sins call for them: and nothing can dry them up, but the dust of the grave. Sometimes we lose our dear friends and relations: the tribute,

which we owe to their memories, must be paid down by tears. Sometimes, their ungodly practices torment us; when, by their debaucheries, they hasten their own interest in our hopes. Sometimes, compassion to other men's sufferings calls for our sorrow; as if we had not grief enough in our own bowels, but we must call for foreign succours to augment them. Our many diseases waste us, and our grinding pains break us; and indeed they were more intolerable, but that they hasten on that death, which will put a period to all our miseries: we shall not then concern ourselves in our groans for the loss of our dear friends, nor for the evil courses or calamities of others: it concerns us nothing then, what stinking breath blasts our good name, nor what unworthy foot treads upon our grave: here, a little pain molests us; there, whole limbs sometimes fall down and crumble into dust, without disturbing that quiet rest, which buries all the sorrows of this life in a profound oblivion; and our souls shall ascend to that place of perfect joy, where neither sorrow nor suffering durst yet appear.

8. *They shall rest from the Labours, which a Corrupt and Sinful Heart puts them to.*

And this is that, which indeed makes it such a blessed rest, where our corruptions shall, at once, cease to act and cease to be. The only thing, which makes God's commands and services so difficult and grievous, is the remainder of sin which still cleaves to us; which both deadens our hearts to what is good, and makes us averse to it. But death will shortly give us rest from these.

(1) We shall rest from all the labours, which we take with a heavy and dull heart, in the ways of God.

We stand in need now of much quickening grace, to act and excite these lumps of lead that lie in our breasts: we are continually tugging at them, to get them a little further, and to raise them up a little higher towards heaven: and it is the great disquietment of our lives, that we find these hearts of ours so heartless and listless to what is holy and spiritual. But it will not be long, ere we shall rest from this labour. We are now like birds of heavy bodies, which are too weighty for their wings; which, when they would be soaring toward heaven, can but run fluttering up and down upon the surface of the earth. Yet these earthly clogs shall shortly drop off: we shall be all wing-free from that dulness, distraction, and weariness, which

now afflict us: when our affections shall be always intent, and not languishing; always burning, and not wasting; and every motion of our souls shall shoot themselves to God, as quick as lightning, and yet as constant as the sun-beams. You, who are outstript by the weakest Christian here, shall there be able to keep pace with the angels themselves.

(2) We shall rest from the labours, which we take with an averse and opposite heart.

There is that reluctancy in the carnal part to what is holy and spiritual, that we cannot bring ourselves to the performance of duty without much grief and conflict; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and, when God calls for spiritual thoughts and holy affections, the corruption of our fleshly hearts sends up noisome vapours, which corrupt and infect the good we do. This is that, which makes the work toilsome. But it shall not be long, ere that, which hinders, shall be removed: and, though we are now under a sad necessity of sinning, then we shall be under a blessed necessity of serving God; and shall find no more trouble therein, than we do in those actions, which we cannot but do. This is that rest, which we shall shortly enjoy from the turmoils and vexations of this life; a rest from the sorrows and sufferings of this life; a rest from the labours that a corrupt heart puts us to.

ii. Now, that this rest might not seem only to be a mere negative thing, a mere dedolency and freedom from pain and labour, such as a mere beast enjoys, and far from being that consummated blessing which those that *die in the Lord* enjoy, my text subjoins, **THEIR WORKS SHALL FOLLOW THEM.**

Now, this may be understood

1. *Of the Works themselves.*

They follow them to heaven, and are there performed by them in glory: the same works end in earth, and enter into heaven with them. As they were performed here weakly and imperfectly, so there they shall be performed with a most absolute perfection. Therefore, whatever hath been spoken of this rest, it must not be understood as if the glorified saints and angels were inactive; and enjoyed in heaven only a long vacation; and lay down to rest upon sweet flowery banks in pleasant shadowy groves; and, without fear and care, laughed away an eternity: no, no; their rest is operative: they are

continually blessing and praising God; and ascribing honour and glory *to him, that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever*; continually beholding and admiring God; rejoicing in him, and in one another's mutual happiness. This is that work of heaven, which shall never grow toilsome nor grievous to them.

2. Their works shall follow them; that is, *the Reward of their works*.

This is so great, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what the Lord hath prepared for those that love him. If Paul were now to preach to you; and to encourage you against the fear of death, from the consideration of that infinite glory and reward which are laid up for you after death; possibly you would expect that he, who had suffered a translation, should at his return make some relation of it, discovering to you what the riches and glory of that place was: and yet, when he purposely relates this his voyage in the other world, he tells us no more than this, that he *was caught up into paradise*, and that he heard words unutterable, *which it is not lawful for a man to utter*: 2 Cor. xii. 4, to the 11th verse. It is so great, that it cannot be fully known till it be fully enjoyed. The Scripture seems to labour for expressions to set forth the greatness of it; it is called a remaining rest, inaccessible light, fresh and overflowing pleasures, an incorruptible inheritance, a kingdom that cannot be shaken. To speak thus, in general, of that heavenly glory, would be more accommodated to the greatness of the subject: but yet it would be more encouragement and satisfaction to treat of it, in particular, so far as our conceptions will reach to it.

Now this unspeakable happiness doth chiefly consist in these things.

(1) In the immediate Vision and Fruition of God, the soul's chief and most satisfying good.

God is now to us the spring-head of our mercies and comforts; but we lie below at the fall of the spring, and draw refreshments from him only through the conduit-pipes of providences and ordinances, and live upon second-hand enjoyments: but, in heaven, we shall lie close to the fountain itself; and shall drink in divine communications, as they flow immediately from God, without having them deadened and flattened in the

conveyance. Now, we behold God through a glass darkly: in heaven, we shall see him face to face, and know him as we are known. And, if it causeth now such raptures of joy in us, when God sometimes darts in but half a glance of his eye upon the soul; oh then within what bounds can our joy contain itself, when we shall constantly fix our eyes upon him, and stedfastly behold his face! that face, from which the most glorious angels, as conscious of their own unworthiness to behold it, do cover and veil their own. Now, when God gives us some glorious discoveries of himself, we are ready to faint and melt down under them: certainly, in heaven, when we shall lie under the glorious rays of the Deity, beating so fully upon us; it is so great, that there were no living there, did not the same God strengthen as well as fill our capacities. This is that beatifical vision, that heaven of heavens, that glory, in the sight of which the angels are satisfied; wherein God shall bestow upon us a clearer eye than that of faith, and be always present with us in a nearer way than that of comfort.

(2) The happiness of heaven consisteth in the Society, which the saints converse with for ever.

And they are holy angels, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*. Here on earth, the angels are given for our guardians; in heaven, for our companions: and, though we are the adopted, and they the natural children of God's great family; yet shall they rejoice with us, that we, who were strangers, are taken in to be heirs with them of that estate of which their rebellious brethren were disinherited. As for the glorified saints, what numerous troops of Apostles, Prophets, and holy Martyrs shall we converse with! and possibly we shall know them all by name. The disciples, at the transfiguration of Christ, knew Moses and Elias: and, possibly, it was by revelation: and so it may be in heaven.

(3) The happiness of heaven consists in the Work, in which we shall be there employed to eternity.

Their works shall follow them; and they shall follow them, as part of their reward. Now, on earth, we look upon the works of holiness as our task and burden: yet, in heaven, we shall look upon them as our joy. Delight springs only from two things: the one, is the proportionableness of the object to our capacities: the other, is the proportionableness of actions to our faculties. This proportion is the most exact in heaven: therefore, there, is the chiefest delight. Now, in heaven, our capa-

cities shall become heavenly and spiritual; and therefore only spiritual and heavenly objects suit with and delight our faculties: it shall be then as natural to us to do the will of God, as now it is to the most wicked sinner to disobey him. And, indeed, the quality of the work that we shall there do, is such as must needs affect us with infinite delight: here, on earth, God calls a Christian to the severe duties of mortification, self-denial, and taking up the cross; but the works of heaven are all smooth, consisting only in these two things, love, and expression of love and praise: this is the work of heaven. Here, an angel sings to a saint; and, there, a saint to an angel: *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*; all joining in one common quire and heavenly echoing, and singing hallelujahs to eternity.

(4) The saints' happiness consists in that additional Glory, which shall for ever rest upon their bodies.

And this shall certainly follow them, though God take a day for the payment of it. This is it, which makes them complete: this they shall have also in the Great Day, as a reward of their works. Now, here, though the expectation of this glory be much more comfortable than the enquiry into it can be certain; yet, because divers things are generally granted and piously believed, I shall briefly propound them to you.

The glory of the body in heaven is held generally to consist in its

Integrity.

Spirituality.

[1] It shall be raised an Entire and Perfect Body.

Every member shall become such, as may be most serviceable to the use of the soul, and as may be most capable of the access of glory: and, though many of them lose their offices, yet still they retain their places. When we shall be discharged from the necessities of life, our members shall be discharged from those troublesome offices: yet shall they not therefore cease to be necessary: though they are discharged of their offices, yet they are reserved for the Judge's sentence. They shall be then free from all the consequences of sin, and from all the fore-runners of death to which here we are incident: from all outward decays, aches, weaknesses; from pain and diseases, corruptions and distempers: they are *sown in corruption*; they are *raised in incorruption*: they are *sown in weakness*; but they are *raised in power*: *sown in dishonour*; and *raised in glory*: 1 Cor. xv

latter end. And, therefore, as Tertullian speaks, “ If God should not raise men entire, then he should not raise them up from the dead; for, if any part be not raised, we are as to that part still dead.” And therefore God raiseth them up entirely and fully from those decays, to which we are here subject.

[2] The glory of the body consists chiefly in its Spirituality.

Not that our bodies shall be changed into spiritual substances; but they shall be endowed with spiritual qualities: and they are Three.

1st. The bodies of the saints in heaven shall shine with a bright and dazzling Light: they *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament....and as the stars, for ever and ever*: Dan. xii. 3.

And this, it is thought, shall proceed from their approximation to God and immediate communion with him: as Moses’s face by long conversing with God did so shine, that the Israelites were dazzled so, as they could not behold him. And, partly, this will be from the radiancy of the soul’s glory, which, being so great, will then diffuse and spill itself abroad upon the body. A cheerful heart makes a cheerful countenance: and, truly, a glorious soul will put a glory upon the body also; which shall then be made more capable to receive every impression from the soul.

2dly. The body shall be endowed with Impassibility.

Neither subject to decays within, nor injuries without; nor stand in any need of those supports of rest, sleep, and food, whereby they are sustained in life.

3dly. They shall be endowed with wonderful Agility; moving to and fro, as the will commands, without any difficulty or weariness.

Possibly, they shall be able to keep pace with the angels themselves in their motion. And, indeed, this agility is but requisite in so spacious a place as heaven.

Now if we add to these, the regulation of the affections, and the perfect operation of the senses; the corporal sight of the body of Jesus Christ, which we may bodily approach, and, with Thomas, put our hands into the print of the nails and our fingers into his side; by this we may well conclude, that our souls cannot well conceive what our bodies shall be then.

Thus I have given you, as it were, a Map of the Heavenly Canaan. But, as it is with other maps, so it is here: every

thing is represented much less, and far short of what it is in reality ; but it will be no great mistake when we come to heaven, if we find things far more and better than they were represented.

II. APPLICATION.

USE i. If then they, who die in the Lord, have such an ample reward to follow them, THIS SHOULD FIRST ENGAGE THEM TO A HOLY LIFE.

Think you, that those, who spend their time in lofty vanity and impertinent sinful pleasures in this world, can have any other but a doleful catastrophe ? what works have they to follow them, but such as will drag them down to torments ? Think you, then, that a parting prayer, a slight “ Lord, have mercy ! ” when you are just going out of the world, will be judged enough to break through the numberless crowd of your sins, and waft your souls over into everlasting blessedness ? Believe it, such as hath been your first, such shall be your final state. Hazard not, therefore, your precious and immortal souls upon the treacherous resolutions of a sick-bed ; and think not that a charitable legacy will compound with God for a sinful life : the way to heaven will be so obstructed by your former guilt, that these your late good works cannot follow you. Then a man resigns up his soul with confidence into the hands of God, when he can reflect upon a well-spent life, and appeal to God with Hezekiah, *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and have done that which is righteous in thy sight.* All other things will be but miserable comforts in a dying hour ; and will then vanish and disappear. The rich man’s bags will not follow him to the tribunal, to bribe his impartial judge ; nor the honourable man’s greatness give him a more favourable audience at the Last Judgment : nor shall the orator’s eloquence then follow him, to cover over a bad cause ; but he shall certainly miscarry, if he hath not made sure of a more powerful Advocate to plead for him. These things will leave the poor soul in its greatest agonies and despair : and then it will appear, that despised holiness and slighted piety will be the only sure companions which will stick to us, even then, when riches, and learning, and all that is idolized by the world, will prove nothing but witnesses of our guilt and condemnation.

USE ii. This may COMFORT US AGAINST THE DEATH OF OUR FRIENDS, WHO, WE KNOW, LIVED PIOUSLY AND RIGHTEOUSLY, desiring to please God in all things, and testifying the truth and soundness of their faith in Christ by their good works.

If such men be not blessed, then God created all mankind to die accursed: but, if they be blessed, and blessed with eternal rest and an unconceivable reward, what mean then these sad hearts and wet eyes? What do these tears evidence, but that you think them miserable, or else yourselves so? for their state is so infinitely glorious, that they are preferred to be kings, and favourites of the King of Kings; where they flow in pleasures and eternal raptures, which they incessantly enjoy: and, had you any interest in their advancement, it would change your affections of grief and sorrow for them into sweet exultation and admiration of their joy and triumph. Think you, after they have tasted of those rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, that ever they would be content to return to you again? or that God should condemn them to live longer in this world? And when you, in their life-time attested your love to them by the sweet harmony and conspiring of your affections with theirs, mourning when they mourned and rejoicing when they rejoiced; what a solecism of friendship is it for you to weep now, when they sing and shout for joy; and to have your eyes blubbered with tears, when God hath wiped away all tears from theirs? Is it your own loss which you lament; because they are taken from you, with whom, nay for whom, you would willingly have died, and given up yourselves to the death? even this is but the effect of self-love, and shews that you are more concerned in your own contentment than in their glory; and, that you might enjoy them yourselves, you would keep them from their near and intimate enjoyment of God. Can you not, for a while, dispense with their absence, for their advantage; and make up the comfort which you want in their presence, by the comfort which you have in the assurance of their happiness? What our Saviour saith to his disciples, John xiv. 28. that may I say to you: If you love them, you will rejoice, because they are gone to their Father. And this separation, by this absence of theirs, is but for a short time: do you but tread the paths of their example and follow their track, and, as their works went before them to heaven, so yours shall follow you; where you shall rest from all your sorrows and troubles; where no affliction nor discontentment shall overcast your perfect joy; where, without

fear of another separation, you shall be satisfied in the enjoyment of one another, and all in the enjoyment of God.

III. I have now finished my Text; and I would finish my Discourse too, but that I should much wrong the GENTLEMAN, whose funeral rites we now celebrate, should I let pass in silence those virtues with which God endowed him; and should wrong you too, in withholding so excellent a pattern for your imitation.

Doubtless, his converse among you was with moderation, gravity, and prudence: which were so natural to him in all the passages of his life, that they have imprinted on you so deep characters, as will redeem his name from oblivion, and make it precious to you.

In his younger years, his employment called him beyond the seas; where the blessing of God followed him: where he did not exchange his principles, nor barter away his good education; but returned with his mind untainted to his friends, and improved both to their joy and his own profit.

He reckoned himself but a steward of that estate, which God blessed him with: his spiritual eyes and hands sought out the necessities of others, to relieve them. Those places of trust to which he was called, he managed with singular prudence and fulness.

The Psalmist gives us the character of a good man, Ps. cxii. 5. *He guides his affairs with discretion.* Such a discreet man was he; who laid his business in such order and method, that, though his employments were many and weighty, yet they never became cumbersome nor unwieldy.

And as for his Relative Duties, wherein the chief glory of a Christian appears, these he performed with much tenderness; whether as a husband or a father. Indeed, the whole course of his life was tempered with such sweetness, meekness, humility, and courtesy: as being ready to do good to any, having nothing of sour reservedness, but a winningness of disposition, whereby he gained as many friends as necessary employments gained him acquaintance.

His piety towards God, which is the crown of all other excellencies, shone forth with a mutual awe and reverence, which possessed his heart with an affectionate seriousness, becoming that awful sense of God's omniscience and omnipresence, making it his design in all things to please God.

His last sickness he underwent with patience worthy a Christian. By his submission to the hand of God, he evidenced the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, whereby he might do with him what he pleased; and yet trusted in his goodness, whereby he knew he would do with him what was best for him. Desirous he was, if the Lord saw good, to live longer: and he prayed, if possible, that the bitter cup might pass from him: and, indeed, the strongest grace and clearest assurance doth not oblige any to extirpate natural desires: St. Paul himself, who 2 Cor. v. 4. was caught up into Paradise, and had a full discovery of the heavenly joy, yet was loth to be stripped out of the body, though he was sure to be clothed immediately with the robes of life and glory. When his disease and sickness encreased upon him, his chief care was, to look, search, and examine his evidences for heaven, which, after some scrutiny and doubt, it produced: he at last acquired, to his own unspeakable comfort and the satisfaction of his acquaintance, a sedate joy; and then resigned up his spirit into the hands of the Lord, his maker; and now rests from his labours, in that eternal rest, which Christ hath promised to such as wait for his appearing.

THE END.

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OF

TEXTS

ILLUSTRATED IN THE WRITINGS

OF

BISHOP HOPKINS.

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Those marked with an asterisk are the subjects of distinct Discourses.

* * In the following catalogue, the Editor has collected, not only all those texts which the Author has directly elucidated; but such also, as receive light from the connection in which they are quoted, and the purpose to which they are applied.

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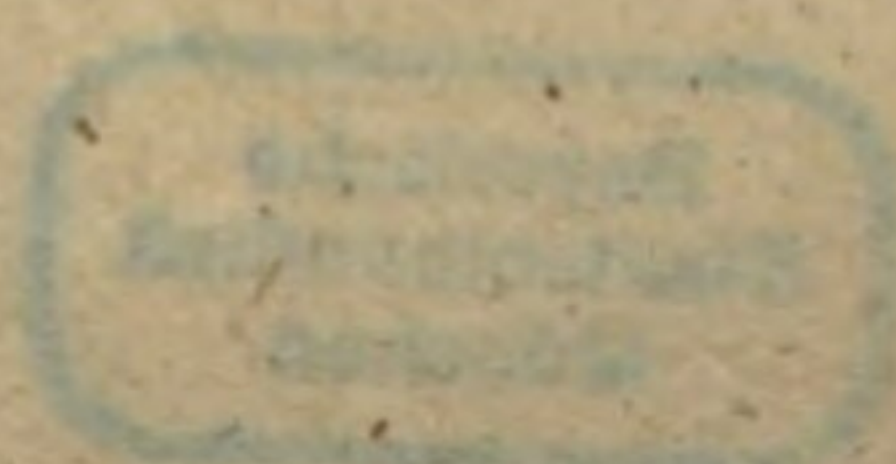
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